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SACRED HISTORY:

OR THE
HISTORICAL PART
OF THE
HOLY SCRIPTURES
OF THE

Old and New Testaments;

DIGESTED INTO DUE METHOD,

WITH RESPECT TO
ORDER OF TIME AND PLACE.

WITH
OBSERVATIONS,

TENDING TO ILLUSTRATE SOME PASSAGES THEREIN.

By **THOMAS ELLWOOD.**

FIFTH EDITION.

VOL. II.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED AND SOLD BY JAMES PHILLIPS, GEORGE YARD,
LOMBARD STREET.

MDCCXCIV.

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HISTORICAL PART

HOLY SCRIPTURES

Old and New Testaments

DIGESTED INTO ONE METHOD



REVIEWED AND CORRECTED BY THE DIRECTOR

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SACRED HISTORY;

OR THE

HISTORICAL PART

OF THE

HOLY SCRIPTURES

OF THE

OLD TESTAMENT.

P A R T III.

The Second Book of SAMUEL; including the First Book of CHRONICLES; and containing an History of 40 Years.

ALTHOUGH Saul was slain, and three of his sons with him; * yet he had another son living, whose name was Ishbosheth, and a valiant general, named Abner: † and whom the people would set up for king, was very uncertain. David, therefore, being yet at Ziklag, and not knowing whether he might venture into any of the cities of Judah; that he might act safely, having the priest and the ephod with him, he inquired of the Lord; and the Lord directing him to go to Hebron, he went thither, taking with him his two wives Ahinoam and Abigail, and all his men, whom he placed every man with his household in the cities of Hebron.

Long he had not been in Hebron before the men of Judah came to congratulate his return, and to offer him the

* A. M. 2949.

† 2 Sam. ii.

crown. * And before they left him, they anointed him king over Judah; which was as far as they could go.

David understanding by them, that the men of Jabesh-Gilead had buried Saul, he sent messengers to them; and together with giving them thanks for performing that kind office to his father-in-law, he took occasion to let them know, that he was now king of Judah, and would requite that kindness to them; which was a fair invitation to them also to proclaim him king there.

But Abner, who was general of all the forces that had been Saul's, took Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, who was then forty years of age; and bringing him to Mahanaim (which was the place where Jacob, returning from Laban, was met by the angels of God, Gen. xxxii. 1, 2.) he made him king over all Israel.

Thus was this new kingdom quickly divided, Judah following David, and Israel sticking to Saul's son Ishbosheth. But this rent, being but of man's making, lasted not long, ere God found means to make it up again.

Yet, in the mean time, some bickerings happened between the forces of these rival kings; for Abner, drawing out king Ishbosheth's forces, marched them from Mahanaim to Gibeon; which Joab, captain-general of king David's forces (and son to Zeruah, David's sister) understanding, he also led forth David's men: and at the pool of Gibeon, the two armies meeting, sat down in fight of one another, having the pool between them.

After a while, Abner provoked Joab to send forth a party to skirmish; which Joab agreeing to, twelve of a side issued forth of each camp: these fighting not in bodies, but single-handed, man to man, every one caught his fellow by the head, and thrusting each other through the body, they all fell down together. From which bold and resolute action, that place was called Helkath Hazzurim, that is, The field of strong men.

This desperate resolution of these forlorn hopes, so heated the spirits of the soldiers on either side, that, the armies presently joining, a sharp battle was fought between them; wherein David's men at length prevailing, Abner was beaten and forced to fly.

Ishbosheth's men thus routed, Asahel (Joab's younger brother, a very nimble-footed youth) in the pursuit took after

Abner, and followed him so close, that Abner finding he could not escape him by running, turned again, and made a stand, to see what he was that followed him so hard; and observing him to be but a youth, and understanding withal that he was Joab's brother, he wished him to give over pursuing him, and take some other prisoner for his prey; but Asahel would not turn aside from following him.

Abner went a little further; but finding that Asahel still pressed upon him, he spake to him again, desiring him to turn from him and leave him: 'For why, said he, shouldst thou provoke me to kill thee? And how shall I look upon thy brother Joab when I have done it?'

But young Asahel, ambitious of the honour of taking the general prisoner, would by no intreaty be persuaded to leave him, but still pressed harder on him; which when Abner saw, and that unless he would be his prisoner, there was no way but to kill or be killed, he smote him with the hinder end of his spear under the fifth rib, so that the spear came out behind him, and down he fell dead in the place.

His falling and lying there gave opportunity to Abner to escape: for though Joab and Abishai (his other brother) with many others, pursued Abner also; yet when they came to the place where Asahel lay dead, they all stood still: so that Abner got time to rally what he could of his scattered forces, and having drawn them up together into one troop, made a stand with them on the top of an hill.

Then sounding a parley, he called to Joab, and putting him in mind that they were all brethren, both by nation and religion, he asked him if he intended the sword should devour for ever, and did not consider that it would be bitterness in the latter end, that he was so backward to sound a retreat. Whereupon Joab, letting him know that the people (if he had not spoken) would have given over the pursuit in the morning, sounded a retreat; and so Abner with his men travelling all night through the plain and over Jordan, got back to Mahanaim; and Joab with his men marching all night also, reached Hebron by break of day. And although they had fought so fiercely, yet the number of the slain was not great on either side; for Abner lost but three hundred and sixty men, and Joab but nineteen, beside his brother Asahel.

* 2 Sam. ii.

But though they parted thus now, yet hostilities did not cease between the two kings and their subjects; for the war continued long between the two houses *: wherein though Abner strengthened himself as much as he could for the house of Saul; yet the house of David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker. And yet Ishbosheth might probably have held it out longer, had it not been for an accident which his own indiscretion brought upon him; by which he lost Abner from his interest, and with him all strength and courage. It happened thus:

Saul had a concubine whose name was Rizpah, whom Ishbosheth charged Abner with having lain with. Abner, a man of high stomach, took this for a great affront; and in high displeasure said to king Ishbosheth, 'Am I a dog's head (that is, Am I as contemptible with thee as a dog) I who have shewed thus much kindness unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his friends, against Judah, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David, that thou chargest me with a fault concerning this woman? So do God to Abner, and more also, except as the Lord hath sworn to David, even so I do to him; to translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from one end of the land to the other.'

Whether the charge was true or no, Ishbosheth, a poor low-spirited prince, was so struck with this lofty language of Abner, that he could not answer him a word. And Abner, being in good earnest, sent agents to David, to transact the matter on his behalf; giving them in charge to acknowledge David's title, and to assure him, that if he would make a league with him, he would use his interest to bring over all Israel to him.

David consented on those terms to make such a league with him. But one thing he required of him previous thereto; which was, that he should bring with him his wife Michal, the daughter of Saul: otherwise, he let him know he would not so much as see him.

David sent also ambassadors to Ishbosheth, to demand of him his wife Michal. Whereupon Ishbosheth sent and took her from her husband Phaltiel, and sent her to David; the

poor man her husband following her weeping as far as to Bahurim, where Abner meeting with him turned him back.

Abner meanwhile practised with the elders of Israel, to bring them over to David; thus discoursing with them, 'Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you. Now, therefore, seeing David is the man, by whom the Lord hath said, he will save his people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and from all their enemies, pursue your former desire, and make him your king.' *

Neither did he tamper only with the Israelites in general; but particularly with the elders of Benjamin, who were more immediately concerned for the house of Saul. And when he found he had gained his point upon them, he then went to Hebron, taking only twenty men with him, and presented himself to David.

David received Abner and his men courteously: and to shew the regard he had to him, he made a feast for them; after which, Abner taking his leave of David, told him, 'He would go and gather all Israel to him, that they might make a league with him; and that he might reign over them all, according to his heart's desire.

Abner was but newly gone from Hebron, when Joab (David's general, who, during the time that Abner had been with David, had been out with a party upon an expedition against the Philistines) returned with a great spoil to Hebron; and being quickly told, by some of his creatures, that Abner had been there, and that the king had received and entertained him kindly, and dismissed him peaceably, he was much disturbed at it: for Joab hated Abner for more causes than one; not only because he had slain his brother Asahel; but for that he doubted, if Abner should bring over Israel to David, and by that means ingratiate himself with the king, he himself might be in danger of being supplanted by him: for Abner was a man of great courage and conduct, and had withal great interest in the people:

Joab therefore hastening to king David, in a rough and soldierly manner, asked him, 'What he had done? It seems, said he, Abner came unto thee; how is it that thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone?' Then suggesting to David, that Abner came only as a spy, to see his strength, and observe the state of his affairs, that he might deceive

him; he went out from David, and sent messengers after Abner to bring him back again (as if David had something further to say to him); whereas David knew nothing of it.

Abner thinking no harm, nor suspecting any danger, returned; and as soon as he was come to Hebron, Joab, who waited for that purpose, took him aside in the gate in a shew of friendship, and under pretence of some private business, there basely stabbed him to death; pretending that he did it in revenge of the death of Asahel his brother, whom Abner in his own defence had slain in battle.

When David heard of this barbarous murder he cried out, 'I and my kingdom are guiltless before the Lord for ever, from the blood of Abner. Let it rest on the head of Joab, and of all his father's house: and let the house of Joab never be without one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, (and so is legally unclean) or that through weakness or infirmity leaneth upon a staff, or that wanteth bread.'

Then commanding Joab and all the people that were with him to rend their clothes, and girding themselves with sackcloth to mourn before Abner, king David himself following the bier, they buried Abner in Hebron. At which the king, lifting up his voice, wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept also: but the king more especially lamented over Abner, saying, 'Died Abner as a fool dieth! Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters; but as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou:' and with that all the people wept again over him. And when (according to the custom they then had of feasting at burials) they came to invite David to eat, he utterly refused, solemnly binding himself not to taste of any food until the sun was set. *

This carriage of David's the people took great notice of; and (as they generally liked what he did) they were much pleased with this: for from hence all concluded that David was not consenting, nor any way privy to Abner's death.

But to his domestick servants the king complained more particularly; and bewailing his own condition, said, 'Know ye not that a prince, and a great man, is fallen this day in Israel? And I, though anointed king, am yet but weak, and not well settled in my kingdom: and these

‘men, the sons of Zeruiah, to wit, Joab and Abishai; (for Abishai also was in the plot against Abner, 2 Sam. iii. 30.) are too hard for me.’ Therefore I cannot now call them to account for it; but must leave them to the Lord, who will reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.

And, indeed, besides the baseness of this murder, which such a man as David could not but abhor, he had great cause to lament this untimely death of Abner, with respect to his own affairs: for it robbed him of a most serviceable and beneficial friend, broke all the measures they had taken for uniting the two kingdoms, and was likely to endanger his losing the Israelitish crown, had Ishbosheth, who then wore it, lived longer.

But this murder of Abner was followed by another, not less treacherous nor inhuman. For Ishbosheth, Saul’s son (whom Abner had set upon the throne of Israel) was greatly dejected, and even dispirited, when he heard of Abner’s death; and the Israelites in general were much troubled for the loss of their captain-general: so that Ishbosheth their king was little regarded, and less guarded.

This gave encouragement to two ruffians to conspire his death; * to which they might probably be the more emboldened, from a consideration, that of Saul’s legitimate stock there was none left who were in a condition to revenge his death upon them. For Mephibosheth, Jonathan’s son, was but a child of seven years old, and lame too of his feet, by a fall which his nurse let him take when she fled in haste with him, upon the report that his father and grandfather were slain.

These two regicides, whose names were Baanah and Rechab, were brothers, sons of Rimmon a Beerothite, belonging to Benjamin, and were captains of bands; but some think of rovers, that lived by spoil and pillage. These coming to Ishbosheth’s house, about the middle of the day, under pretence of fetching wheat (so little odds, it seems, there was between the palace and the granary) went directly into his bed-chamber; where finding the king lying on a bed, because it was the heat of the day, they slew him, and cut off his head, in the second year of his reign. † Then, taking the head with them, they went out again undiscovered, and travelled all night through the plain toward

* 2 Sam. iv.

† A. M. 2951.

Hebron: conceiving high hopes that they should be welcome guests to David, bringing with them such a present. In expectation whereof, being come to Hebron, they presented the head to David, with this short speech; 'Behold the head of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul thine enemy, which sought thy life: and the Lord hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed.'

But David, filled with horror and indignation at the sight of the murdered king's head, said to these bloody regicides, 'As the Lord liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity, when one came and brought me tidings of Saul's death, supposing he had brought me acceptable news; nay, and brought me also the crown and bracelet which Saul wore, expecting I would have given him a reward; yet, when I understood by him, that he had a hand in his death, I caused him to be seized on, and slain in Ziklag. How much more then, when such wicked men as ye are, have slain a righteous person (one that had done you no wrong) in his own house (where he ought to have been safe) and upon his bed (where he could not defend himself)? Shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and cut you off from the earth?' * Then commanding his guards to fall upon them, they slew them; and having cut off their hands and feet, hanged them up over the pool in Hebron: but the head of Ishbosheth they buried in the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron.

This murder of Ishbosheth made way for the uniting the kingdoms of Israel and Judah into one again. † For upon his death, all the tribes of Israel (that is, the elders, or heads of the tribes) came unto David at Hebron; and having, as an introduction, told him, they were of his bone and flesh; and in times past, even when Saul was their king, he was their captain that led them out and in; and that it was of him that the Lord had said, 'Thou shalt feed my people Israel; and shalt be a captain over them;' David thereupon making a league with them, they anointed him king over Israel, and at Hebron they were feasted three days together.

David had lived now about two years in Hebron, and five years more he lived there: for he is said to have reigned seven years in Hebron. And having now the united

* 2 Sam. iv.

† 2 Sam. v.

forces of Israel and Judah under his command, he led forth his men to Jerusalem, against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land; who, trusting too much to the strength of the place, told David in derision, 'Except he took away the blind and the lame, he should not come in thither.' Implying, the place was so strong, that if there were none but blind and lame to defend it, he with all his forces could not take it.

David, resolving to correct their insolence, caused proclamation to be made, that whosoever should scale the fort, by getting up into the gutter, and should smite the Jebusites with their lame and their blind, who had made themselves hateful to David, he should be captain-general of all his forces.

This Joab, David's sister's son, who had command before of the forces of Judah, performed. By which means David took the strong hold of Zion, in which he afterwards dwelt: and when he had built it round about from Millo (or the fortress) and inward, it was called, 'The city of David.'

Now began David's affairs to prosper, and his fame to spread: for the Lord God of Hosts was with him; and he perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel: Which his neighbours also took notice of: and thereupon Hiram, king of Tyre, sent ambassadors to David, to congratulate his accession to the crown, and to make him a present of cedar trees, and workmen to build him a palace.

On the other hand, when the Philistines heard that the Israelites had anointed David for their king, they came up to seek him, spreading themselves in the valley of Rephaim; whereupon David went down to the hold. But before he would go forth against them, he inquired of the Lord if he should go, and if the Lord would deliver them into his hand? And the Lord bidding him go, and assuring him that he would deliver them to him, he marched forth against them, and smote them, and put them to the rout: so that they fled, and for haste left their images behind them, which David and his men burnt. The place where this battle was fought, David called Baal-perazim, that is, The plain of breaches, or divisions; giving this reason for the name, 'The Lord hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters.'

Yet long it was not ere the Philistines, having levied new forces, came up again; and spreading themselves in the valley of Rephaim, offered David battle.

David would not presume upon his late success; but inquired of the Lord again. And now the Lord commanded him not to go up, that is, directly to engage them; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over-against the mulberry-trees: and when he should hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry-trees, then he should bettir himself; for then the Lord would go out before him, to smite the host of the Philistines. And David doing so, as the Lord had commanded him, he smote the Philistines with a great slaughter.

Having by his means now gotten a time of quiet and respite from war, David consulting his captains and chief leaders, said to all the congregation of Israel, 'If it seem good unto you, and that if it be of the Lord our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren every where, that are left in the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites, in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us. And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we inquired not at it in the days of Saul.'*

To this proposal the whole congregation assenting, as a thing that all the people approved, David gathering the people together, went up with them to Baalah (otherwise called Kirjath-jearim) belonging to Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the Lord of Hosts, that dwelleth between the cherubims.

The ark is said to have been twenty years in the house of Abinadab at Kirjath-jearim, 1 Sam. vii. 1, 2. But that twenty years must be referred to the time of the single administration of Samuel in the government: for the ark was taken in the last year of Eli, and the Philistines kept it but seven months, 1 Sam. vi. 1. Samuel succeeding to Eli in the government, is reckoned to have judged Israel by himself twenty years before there was a king, and twenty years more are allotted to Samuel and Saul together, and to Saul by himself after Samuel. So that from the death of Eli, when the ark was taken, to the death of Saul, must be forty years. And though seven months of that time it was with the Phi-

* 1 Chron. xiii. 1, 2, 3.

listines, yet David having, after Saul's death, reigned seven years and six months in Hebron, and some time after that in Jerusalem, before he went to fetch up the ark, it could not be much less than fifty years that the ark had been at Kirjath-jearim, in the house of Abinadab.

Thither went David and the Israelites to fetch it from thence, and bring it to Jerusalem. But not minding the law, which required them to carry the ark upon their shoulders, Numb. vii. 9. they, following the example of the Philistines, put it into a cart, appointing Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, to drive the cart. And in this manner setting forward, David with all the house of Israel followed it, playing before the Lord upon divers sorts of musical instruments, as harps, psalteries, timbrels, cornets, and cymbals.

Thus they went on till they came to a place called Nachon's Threshing-floor, where the oxen stumbling, shook the cart; which made Uzzah officiously put forth his hand and lay hold of the ark, lest it should fall. * Uzzah's intention, no doubt, was good in doing this. But it being contrary to the law, which forbade all but the priests, even the Levites themselves, to touch the holy things, Numb. iv. 15. the Lord smote Uzzah for his rashness; so that he died there by the ark.

This breach which the Lord had made upon poor Uzzah, struck David with great fear; † and mistaking it for a sign that God was not pleased the ark should come to him, he would not bring it into his city; but carried it aside into the house of Obed Edom the Gittite, who was a Levite: where it continued three months, and the Lord blessed Obed-Edom, and all that he had.

In which time David perceiving their error, which had provoked the Lord to anger, and occasioned Uzzah's death, and understanding that the Lord had blessed the house of Obed-Edom since the ark had been with him; he took heart now to remove it from thence, and bring it into his own city. ‡

But that he might do it regularly (having first prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent, and declared that none ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites) he called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the chief of the Levites; and putting them in mind

* A. M. 2959. † 1 Chron. xiii. ‡ 2 Sam. vi. 1 Chron. xiii.

that they were the chief of the fathers of the Levites, bid them sanctify themselves, they and their brethren, that they might bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel unto the place which he had prepared for it: 'For, said he, because ye did not so at the first, therefore the Lord our God made this breach upon us; for that we sought him not after the due order.'

The priests and Levites thus admonished of their duty, sanctified themselves; and the Levites took up the ark of God, with the staves thereof, and bare it upon their shoulders, as Moses, according to the word of the Lord, had commanded. And the Levites, by David's direction, appointed some of their brethren to sing, and to play upon instruments of musick. And when all things were thus disposed in a due order, king David, with the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, set forward to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord from the house of Obed-Edom with joy. And when they that did bear the ark of the Lord had advanced six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings, to wit, seven bullocks and seven rams.

King David had dressed himself that day, somewhat like the Levites and singers, in a linen ephod, in which he danced before the ark with all his might; and so brought up the ark with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet, and with several other sorts of musical instruments. And as they entered the city, Michal, the daughter of Saul, looking through a window, saw her husband, king David, leaping and dancing before the Lord: and either not understanding, or not duly considering the reason upon which he did it, she despised him in her heart.

Now when they had brought in the ark of the Lord, and had set it in its place, in the midst of the tabernacle that king David had pitched for it, he offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord. And then blessing the people in the name of the Lord of Hosts, he distributed to every one of Israel, as well to the women as the men, a cake (or loaf) of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine, and so dismissed them.

Then having appointed certain Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, to record what was done, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel, king David

delivered unto Afaph, the chief of the singers, a psalm of thanksgiving unto the Lord; which as delivered in 1 Chron. xvi. from ver. 8 to 37. contains the cvth psalm to ver. 16. with little variation; and then takes in the xcvith psalm.

Matters being thus disposed, as the people returned every one to his house, so David returned to his also, to bless his household.* And now out comes his wife Michal to meet him, and (for want of a right consideration and sense of the service he had been engaged in) thus in an ironical upbraiding way received him; 'How glorious, said she, 'was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself in 'the sight of the handmaids of his servants, as one of 'the vain fellows uncovereth himself!'

King David not brooking this reproach from his wife, told her, 'It was before the Lord he had so humbled himself, 'who had chosen him before her father, and before all his 'house, and had appointed him ruler over his people Israel.' Then he let her know, that for all her taunting, he would play before the Lord, and would be yet more vile in this sense, and debase himself more in his own sight; and that though she despised him, those very maidservants whom she twitted him with, would honour him for it.

Michal's offence in this matter was threefold; against her husband, against her king, and against God; for whose sake, and in honour of whom, her royal husband had done that which she reproached him for. And for this offence, her punishment was, that she should be childless all the rest of her life, as, for aught appears, she had been hitherto.

By this time David's house, which Hiram, 2 Sam. v. 11. 1 Chron. xiv. 1. had sent him timber and workmen to build, was finished, and he peaceably settled in it; the Lord having given him rest for a while from all his enemies round about. † Upon which occasion he is thought to have composed the thirtieth psalm, which the title thereof seems to import: though some think that psalm was made upon David's return after Absalom's rebellion, and his purging his house from Absalom's pollutions.

And now a religious concern possessed his mind, to build a temple to the Lord. Wherefore having Nathan the prophet one day with him, he said to the prophet, 'See now, 'I dwell in an house of cedar; but the ark of God dwel-

* 2 Sam. vi.

† 2 Sam. vii. 1 Chron. xvii.

• leth within curtains;’ which is a periphrasis of the tabernacle.

Nathan readily understood him; and concluding so fair a motion deserved encouragement, replied, ‘Go, do all that is in thine heart: for God is with thee.’ But herein the good prophet missed, judging from his own apprehension of the goodness of the thing, without consulting God; who will have all his work done in his own time and way, and by such only as he appoints thereunto.

The same night therefore, the word of the Lord came to Nathan the prophet, saying, ‘Go, tell David, my servant, thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in: for I have not dwelt in an house since the day that I brought up Israel unto this day; but have gone from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another. In all the places wherein I have walked with all Israel, have I blamed any of the judges of Israel (whom I commanded to feed my people) for not building me an house of cedar? that thou shouldst presume to take such a work upon thee without my order.’

Then charging the prophet to remind David from how low a condition the Lord had taken him, and to what an height of greatness he had raised him, he bid him tell David that he would provide a place of rest and safety for his people in general, and in particular would establish David’s family: and that after his death, he would set up one of his sons upon his throne; which son should build an house for him; and he would establish the kingdom unto him for ever, and would be a father to him, and would take him for a son, and would deal by him as a son: so that if he should commit iniquity, he would not take his mercy wholly from him, to cut him off, as he had done Saul; but would chastise him with the rod of men, that is, tenderly, as parents do their own children.

This message Nathan delivered to David; and without doubt, then gave him the reason also, why the Lord would not let him build an house; which was because he had made great wars, and had shed much blood; as himself afterwards told his son Solomon, 1 Chron. xxii. 8.

When David had received this message, that he might shew his subjection to the will of God, and express his

• 2 Sam. vii,

1 Chron. xvii.

thankfulness to the Lord, he went in and sat before the Lord; and debasing himself, that he might the more fully acknowledge the goodness and munificence of God unto him, in raising him to what he was, he returned most hearty thanks to the Lord for his manifold favours conferred on him, and for his gracious promise to settle his son upon the throne, and establish his family in the government; concluding with earnest supplication, that the blessing of the Lord might rest upon him and his house for ever. Which read more at large in 2 Sam. vii. from ver. 18. to the end.

David, now sensible that he had mistaken his work, in designing to build an house for God, applied himself to his proper service for which the Lord had raised him up; which was, to subdue the enemies of Israel, and enlarge the kingdom which he was to leave to his peaceable successor. *

First, therefore, falling upon the Philistines, he took from them the royal city Gath, with the towns belonging to it, and brought the Philistines into subjection. This city Gath was called Methegammah, or the Bridle of Bondage, because it kept the country in bondage.

Then turning his forces upon Moab, he reduced the Moabites to that condition, that, demolishing their forts, he put to death whom he pleased, and whom he pleased he saved alive, making them his servants and tributaries.

From thence going on to settle the borders of the country, at the river Euphrates, Hadadezer (called also Hadarezer, 1 Chron. xviii. 3.) the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, opposing him, he put Hadadezer to the worst, and took from him a thousand chariots, and seven thousand horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen; and reserving horses for an hundred chariots only, he houghed (or cut the hamstrings) of the rest of the chariot horses.

The Syrians of Damascus, hearing how hard it went with Hadadezer, came forth to succour him; and of them David slew two and twenty thousand. This loss so weakened them, that David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus, and made the Syrians his servants and tributaries.

In his return from smiting the Syrians, the Edomites encountered him in a place called the Valley of Salt; of whom he slew eighteen thousand men, and thereby subdued

* 2 Sam. viii. 1 Chron. xviii.

Edom too; and putting garrisons upon them, made the Edomites also his servants. And upon this occasion he is thought to have composed the sixtieth psalm.

From this expedition he brought with him to Jerusalem good store of gold and of brass; for from Hadadezer's soldiers he took shields of gold; and from Berah and Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, he took a great deal of brass.

Thus came David safe back, the Lord having preserved him whithersoever he went, and given him renown for his great achievements. And now reigning over all Israel, and being at rest from war, he applied himself to execute judgment and justice unto all his people, having Joab (his sister Zeruiah's son) for his general; Jehoshaphat for recorder; Zadok, the son of Ahitub (of the stock of Eleazer, 1 Chron. vi. 4. and 8.) and Ahimelech, the son of Abiathar, of the line of Ithamar, for priests (grandson to that Ahimelech of Nob, whom Saul slew by the hand of Doeg, 1 Sam. xxii.); Serajah for secretary of state; and Benajah, the son of Jehoiadah, for captain of the guards; which consisted of Cherethites (who were of Israel) and Pelethites (who were of Judah;) veteran soldiers all. And David's sons, which were many (for he had six born in Hebron, while he lived there, and thirteen after he came to Jerusalem, besides the sons of his concubines, 1 Chron. iii. ver. 1. to 10.) were all princes.

Hadadezer, it seems, had had wars with Toi (called also Tou, 1 Chron. xviii. 9.) king of Hamath (a city of Canaan, Numb. xiii. 21. which fell to the lot of Naphthali, Josh. xix. 32. 35.) Wherefore king Toi, hearing how David had beaten Hadadezer, sent his son Joram to salute king David, and congratulate his good success. Joram brought David a present from his father, of vessels of silver, gold, and brass; all which, with the silver and gold that he had taken from all the nations that he had subdued, king David did dedicate unto the Lord, for the service of the temple that was to be built.

And now, settled in peace and prosperity, David remembered the former kindness of his true friend and brother Jonathan. * And inquiring if there was any of Saul's family unto whom he might shew kindness for Jonathan's sake, Ziba, an old servant of Saul's, was called, as one

* 2 Sam. ix.

that could best give an account of his master's family. He acquainted David, that Jonathan had a son yet living, named Mephibosheth, who was lame of his feet. Whereupon David, understanding by Ziba where he was, sent and fetched him to him; and receiving him very courteously, bid him not fear; for he would certainly shew him kindness for his father Jonathan's sake, and would restore him all the lands of his grandfather Saul, and he should always eat at his table. Mephibosheth thereupon bowing, and abasing himself, expressed the sense he had of the king's goodness, in taking notice of so mean a person as he was.

But David calling for Ziba, said to him, 'I have given unto Mephibosheth, thy master's son, all that did appertain unto Saul, and to all his house. Thou, therefore, with thy sons and thy servants, shall till the land for him; and thou shalt bring in the fruits for thy master Mephibosheth's son (for Mephibosheth had a young son, named Micho.) But as for Mephibosheth himself, he shall always eat at my table.' Ziba undertaking the charge, he and his family, fifteen sons and twenty servants, were all servants unto Mephibosheth; who himself, dwelling at Jerusalem, did eat continually at the king's table, as one of the king's sons.

Some time after this, * David having heard that Nahash, king of Ammon, was dead, and that Hanun his son succeeded him; and gratefully remembering some kindness, which it seems Nahash had formerly shewed him (probably in the time of his troubles under Saul, though I find no particular mention of it in the story) in return of kindness, sent an embassy of condolence to Hanun, to comfort him for the death of his father, and congratulate his accession to the crown.

When these ambassadors were come to the Ammonitish court, the princes of Ammon persuaded their king, that David had not sent them in honour to his father, or to comfort him; but that, under that pretence, he had sent them as spies, to search out the strength of the city, that he might invade it. *

Hanun thereupon seizing on the ambassadors, shaved off one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle to their buttocks, and in that reproachful manner sent them away.

* 2 Sam. x. 1 Chron. xix. † A. M. 2966.

The men, thus basely exposed to contempt, were so ashamed, they knew not how to return home. Wherefore David, being advertised of the abuse, sent some to meet them, and bid them tarry at Jericho until their beards were grown again.

This violation of the law of nations, which gives protection to ambassadors, the Ammonites afterwards (but too late) considered it was not likely king David would put up with. Wherefore expecting to be called to account for it, they sent and hired men out of Syria and other neighbouring parts to the number of three and thirty thousand: and drawing out also their own men from their several cities, they made all the provision they could for their defence. And David, not bearing to let such an insolent affront go unpunished, sent Joab with all the host of the mighty men against them.

The Ammonites expecting them, had ranged their battle before their own city, at the entrance of the gate, having their mercenary forces in a body by themselves in the field; which when Joab saw, he also divided his army into two parts; and picking out all the choice men of Israel, he himself led them up against the mercenaries, leaving the rest of his forces with his brother Abishai, to engage the Ammonites. Then he and his brother agreeing to relieve each other as need should require, Joab exhorted all his men to be of good courage, and to behave themselves valiantly for their people, and for the cities of their God, and leave the success to the Lord.

Joab having thus encouraged his men, made a fierce charge upon the Syrians, and soon put them to flight. The sight of which so discouraged the Ammonites, that they fled also, and got into the city. And thus, with a victory easily obtained, Joab returned with his army to Jerusalem.

But it was not long ere he was obliged to draw forth his men again. For the Syrians, to recover their late loss, raised a new army; and Hadarezer sent and brought over the Syrians that were beyond the river, who all came to Helam, having Shobach, the captain of Hadarezer's host, at the head of them.

As soon as David heard of this, he gathered all his forces together, and passing over Jordan, marched himself with them to Helam. The Syrians, as soon as they saw him come, putting themselves in order, gave him battle. In which David prevailing, the Syrians fled, having lost Shobach their general,

general, and about seven and forty thousand men; whereof some were horsemen, some foot, and some that fought in chariots. And when the petty kings, who were tributaries to Hadarezer, saw that they were smitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and served them: for having smarted so deeply for their kindness to the Ammonites, they were afraid to help them any more.

But David, resolving to chastise the Ammonites yet more sharply for their late insolence, sent Joab forth the next campaign with a very great army against them; who having ravaged the country, and destroyed the Ammonites wherever he could come at them, laid siege at length to their royal city Rabbah, the metropolis of the Ammonites.

But David, who had better have been at the head of his army, lay loitering now at home; and having taken his ease upon his bed one afternoon, (as the manner of great persons in those hot countries was) he arose in the evening, and to enjoy the benefit of a cool air walked upon the roof of his house, which (according to the appointment in the law, -Deut. xxii. 8.) was built flat, with battlements round about the roof, to prevent any one's falling off.

From thence his roving eye happened to espy a very beautiful woman bathing and washing herself privately in her garden, probably for purification sake, according to the law, Lev. xv. * And inquiring who she was, he was told her name was Bathsheba (called also Bathshua, 1 Chron. iii. 5.) the daughter of Eliam (called there also Ammiel) and wife of Uriah; who, though an Hittite by nation, was proselyted to the Jewish religion, and so marrying this Israelitish woman, lived in Jerusalem; but was at that time with the army at the siege of Rabbah.

David, taken with the woman's beauty, sent for her, and lay with her; and she thereupon conceiving, sent him word that she was with child. † Now though David seemed not to be sensible of the evil he had done, yet he was of the shame that might come upon him by it; and therefore contriving how to hide it, he sent to Joab to send home Uriah the Hittite to him, as if he had some particular business with him.

When Uriah was come to the king, after some general inquiries, how Joab did, and how the people fared, and how

* A. M. 2970.

† 2 Sam. xi.

the war proceeded, David, in seeming kindness to Uriah, as one that might be weary after his journey, bid him go down to his house and wash his feet (that is, rest and refresh himself;) and withal sent a mess of meat after him. But Providence so disposed, that Uriah, though he took his leave of the king, did not go down to his house; but, falling in with the yeomen of the guard, slept at the door of the king's house.

When David understood next morning that Uriah had not gone home, he called him to him, and asked him what the matter was that he did not go home, seeing he came off from a journey. Uriah bluntly and soldier-like made him answer, 'That inasmuch as the ark, with Israel and Judah, abode in tents, and his lord general Joab, with the rest of the king's servants, were encamped in the open fields, he would not indulge himself so far as to go to his house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with his wife.'

When David found he could not work upon him sober, he resolved to try what he could do with him when he was drunk. Wherefore, keeping him another day, he feasted him highly, and plied him so with strong liquors that he made him drunk; hoping that then he would go home to his wife: but neither sober nor drunk could Uriah be drawn to it. But at evening, going forth from the king's presence, he clapt himself down in the guard-chamber, and there slept.

This put David upon a worse course: for now he resolved Uriah should die; that, since he would not cover, he might not discover, nor revenge his offence.

Wherefore dismissing Uriah, he sent by him a letter to Joab, wherein he ordered Joab to set Uriah in the fore front of the battle, and in the most dangerous place; and then retire from him, that he might be smitten and die.

Accordingly, Joab observing what part of the city was best defended, assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there were valiant men; and when the besieged made a sally, they slew some of the besiegers, and amongst them Uriah.

Joab soon sent an express to David, to give him an account of the success of the war; bidding him, if he found the king displeased that things were no better, and that he should blame them for approaching so near, within danger of the wall, he should then tell him of Uriah's death; which (by the letter he had received) he knew would please him, though perhaps he might not then know why.

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The messenger thus instructed went to David, and having given him an account of the battle; how daringly the enemy sallied forth against them; how they beat them back to the very entrance of the gate; and how the archers, shooting from the wall, had slain some of the king's servants, and among the rest, Uriah the Hittite. David, having what he aimed at, sent back the messenger, bidding him encourage Joab to go forward, and not to be troubled at the loss; but consider that the sword makes no difference, but devours one as well as another; and that therefore he should make his battle stronger, renew his assaults with greater vigour, and batter the city until he had overthrown it.

Now when Bathsheba heard that her husband Uriah was dead, she made a formal mourning for him; and when that was over, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son: but the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord.

Mean while Joab having straitened Rabbah, and by assault taken that part of the city wherein the springs and conduits of water were * (whence he foresaw the city could not long hold it) he dispatched a messenger to David, to acquaint him what progress he had made, and to intreat him to come with the rest of his forces, and be present in person at the taking of the city, lest, otherwise, if Joab should take it without him (or in his absence) it should thenceforth be called by Joab's name.

David thereupon, gathering his people together, went to Rabbah, and fighting against it, took it. And besides the spoil of the city, which he brought away in great abundance, he took their king's crown from off his head, and had it set upon his own head: which crown, weighing a talent of gold, was worth four thousand and five hundred pounds sterling (according to Godwyn's Moses and Aaron, l. vi. c. x.) besides the precious stones that were on it.

As for the people that were in Rabbah, they having exasperated him by a double offence; first, in the abuse put upon him in the persons of his ambassadors, 2 Sam. x. 4. which gave the occasion for this war; and now, in holding out to the last extremity till the place was taken by storm, he gave them no quarter: but, putting them to the extremest torments, made them suffer under saws and axes of iron,

* 2 Sam. xii.

and under harrows, and caused them to pass through the brick-kiln. And having dealt in like manner with the inhabitants of the other cities of the Ammonites, he returned in triumph with his people to Jerusalem.

Now king David thought himself safe in the possession of Bathsheba (whom he had brought to his bed through the dishonour and blood of her husband;) when God sent his prophet Nathan to him, to rouse him out of his adulterous lethargy, and make him unwittingly his own judge.

This the prophet did by proposing to him the following parable, as demanding justice of him for an oppressed poor man against a rich oppressor.

‘ There were, said Nathan to the king, two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe-lamb, which he had bought and brought up among his children, so that it did eat and drink as he eat and drank, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there coming a traveller to visit the rich man, he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the stranger that was come to him; but took the poor man’s lamb and dressed it, to entertain his guest.’

David’s anger was greatly kindled against this rich man; and presently passing sentence on him, said to Nathan, ‘ As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing is worthy to die: and he shall also restore the lamb four-fold, because he did this thing, and had no pity.’

Little thought David that he had sentenced himself, till the prophet turning quick upon him, said, ‘ Thou art the man.’ That was an home-stroke. Yet to set it more home, and leave David without defence or excuse, the prophet went on, and by way of aggravation added: ‘ Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul, and I gave thee thy master’s house, and thy master’s wives into thy bosom. I gave thee also the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given thee such and such things. Wherefore then hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? For thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife (for though he was slain by the Ammonites, yet inasmuch as thou didst con-
‘ trive

'trive and appoint his death, thou art guilty of his blood;) and therefore the sword shall not depart from thine house all thy days. And because thou hast despised me, in taking the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife, thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house; and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of the sun: for though thou didst it secretly, I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun in the most open manner.'

Poor David, pricked to the heart, and self-condemned, made no excuse; but simply said, 'I have sinned against the Lord.' The confession was short, but full. And he who knew the integrity of his heart, commissioned his prophet thereupon to tell him, he would not take him strictly at his word; but would transfer the sentence of death (which he unwittingly had pronounced upon himself) from him unto the child. 'The Lord also, said Nathan to David, hath put away thy sin: thou shalt not die thyself for it. Yet because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child that is born to thee (of this adulterous congress) shall surely die.'

The prophet Nathan, having thus delivered his message, departed home: and immediately the Lord struck the child, so that it was very sick. David therefore besought God for the child, and, keeping a fast, went in and lay all night upon the earth; so that although the elders of his house went to him, and intreated him to arise and eat, yet he would not.

On the seventh day (from the child's birth, say Tremellius and Junius) the child died: and David's servants, seeing how he grieved while the child was alive, were afraid to tell him that it was dead, lest he should then afflict himself more. But when David by their whispering suspected, and upon inquiry understood, that the child was dead, he arose from the earth, and washed and anointed himself, and having changed his apparel, he went into the house of the Lord and worshipped. After which, returning to his own house, he did eat.

This made his servants wonder, that he, who fasted and wept for the child while it was alive, should rise and refresh himself with food when it was dead. 'But David removed their wonder, by telling them he fasted and wept while the child was alive, in hopes that God would be graciously pleased

pleased to spare the child's life. ' But now, said he, that the child is dead, wherefore should I fast, seeing I cannot bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.'

About this time it was, at least on this occasion, that David composed the one and fiftieth psalm: which the reader, before he proceeds further, may do well to turn to and read.

After this, David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and she bare him another son. Whereupon the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to him, to bid him call this son Solomon; which name signifies peaceable; and was therefore given him, because the Lord had promised, not only that he himself should be a man of rest, but that he would give peace and quietness in his days to Israel, 1 Chron. xxii. 9. And because the Lord loved this child, David called him also Jedidiah, that is, Beloved of the Lord.

Although David had many sons, yet we read but of one daughter that he had, * whose name was Tamar, sister to Absalom, the king's third son, whom he had by Maacha, the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur.

And now began that judgment which God had so lately denounced against David (viz. ' That he would raise up evil against him out of his own house,' 2 Sam. xii. 11.) For Amnon the king's eldest son (which he had by his wife Ahinoam the Jezreelitess) fell desperately in love with his half-sister Tamar, whose extraordinary beauty so captivated the young prince's affection, that he pined away through an hopeless desire after her: for she, being a young virgin, was so carefully kept within the king's house (as the manner of breeding the Jewish damsels was, those especially that were of the higher rank) that Amnon, though her brother, knew not how to come at her.

The trouble of Amnon's mind discovering itself in his countenance, gave occasion to Jonadab, his intimate friend and cousin-german (as being the son of Shimeah, David's brother) to inquire of him what ailed him, that he (who being the king's eldest son, might be supposed to have whatever he desired) looked so thin, and wasted daily in his flesh? Amnon, at Jonadab's importunity, told him plainly, he was in love with Tamar, his brother Absalom's sister.

Jonadab thereupon, being a very subtle man, advised his cousin Amnon to feign himself sick, and betake himself to

* 2 Sam. xiii.

his bed; which would draw his father to visit him: and then he should request his father to let his sister Tamar come and dress him something to eat, that he, seeing her do it, might eat it from her hand.

Pursuant to this advice, Amnon took his bed like a sick man; which when the king heard of, he quickly came to see him: and Amnon intreating the king his father to let his sister Tamar come and make him a couple of cakes, the king, suspecting nothing of a design, sent word to Tamar, that she should go to her brother Amnon's house, and dress for him what he would have to eat.

Tamar very innocently went; and finding her brother Amnon on his bed, she made him such cakes as he directed, and having baked them, brought them to him: but his stomach did not yet serve him; neither would he eat while the company was there. But when all were gone, so that he only and she were left alone together, he desired her to bring the cakes to him: which she doing, he took hold of her, and said; 'Come, lie with me, my sister.'

The poor princess, surprised at so strange a proposition, and hoping to prevail with him by persuasion, begged him to let her alone, and not attempt to violate her chastity: laying before him the guilt he would bring upon himself, (by so positive a breach of the law, Lev. xviii. 9.) the shame he would expose her to, and the contempt he would subject himself to, by committing an act not only very sinful, but extremely foolish also; when-as, in all probability, if he made suit to her father for her, he might have his consent to marry her: which course she advised him to take, perhaps to gain time, and free herself from the present danger.

But Amnon was not to be answered with words. This was not a sudden heat, but a settled desire, and a contrived design upon her. And, therefore, having now gained his opportunity, he was deaf to all her reasons, counsel, and intreaties; and being stronger than she, he forced her.

Having obtained his wicked end, the answering of his lust, Amnon's hot love presently turned to burning hatred. He hated Tamar so exceedingly, that the hatred wherewith he hated her, was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her. And in this hateful fit, he churlishly bid her 'Arise and be gone.'

This troubled Tamar much, not only from the sense of his unkindness, but of the danger of discovering (by this means) the guilt and shame he had brought upon himself and her. Wherefore she told him, he had no cause to deal thus roughly with her; and that the evil of turning her thus out of doors, would be worse (in the consequences of it) than the other that he had done unto her. But he refusing to hear her, called his servant, and bid him put her out of doors, and bolt the door after her: which accordingly the servant did.

Poor Tamar, thus abused and basely dealt with, rent her garment (which was of divers colours, as, for distinction sake, the unmarried daughters of kings in that age used to wear): and having put ashes upon her head, she laid her hand also on her head (in token of great sorrow) and went crying away to her brother Absalom's house.

As soon as Absalom saw her in that condition, suspecting what had befallen her, he asked her, if her brother Amnon had been with her. And when she had told him how she had been dealt with, he wished her to consider that Amnon was her brother, against whom if she should complain, it was not likely she should obtain justice, he being the king's eldest son; and that her complaining would but spread her reproach, and bring infamy upon their whole family: and therefore he advised her to keep her own counsel, and not lay this injury to heart.

Tamar taking her brother Absalom's advice, remained in his house; but in a desolate condition. As for Absalom, he, dissembling his knowledge of the matter, hid his resentment of the injury: and though he hated Amnon, for having forced his sister; yet he took no notice of it to him.

But when king David heard of it, he was very wroth; yet we read not of any punishment inflicted on Amnon for it: for David was an indulgent father.

Full two years did Absalom wait for an opportunity to be revenged on his brother Amnon, which at length he thus contrived: he had a day of sheep-shearing at his country-house, to which he invited all the king's sons; and to colour the matter invited the king himself first.

The king excused himself from going, upon the account that he would not put him to too great charges; and though Absalom pressed, he refused to go: yet to let him see he was not offended with him, he gave him his blessing before he

he parted with him. Absalom then intreated him to let his brother Amnon go with him; which David made some hesitation at. but Absalom's importunity prevailed with him, to let not only Amnon, but all the rest of the king's sons, go with him to his sheep shearing feast.

Absalom had given his servants a strict charge before hand, that when Amnon's heart should be merry with wine, and he should bid them smite him, they should fall on courageously and kill him, and he would bear them out. The servants, obsequious to their master's command, when he gave them the watch-word, fell upon prince Amnon, though heir apparent to the crown, and killed him. This put all the rest of the king's sons in such a fright, not knowing where the assassination would end, that, not attempting to revenge their brother's death, they every one mounted his mule, and fled towards their father's court.

But report was speedier than they. So that ere they could reach the court, tidings were brought to David, 'That Absalom had slain all the rest of the king's sons, and had not left one of them alive.'

At this astonishing news, the king tore his garment, and lay on the ground; and all his servants stood by with their clothes rent; which when Jonadab (David's brother's son, the same who had encouraged and counselled Amnon to take that course, for the satisfying of his lust, which had brought him to this untimely end) observed, he, to mitigate the king's grief, desired him not to think that all his sons were slain: for he could assure him, that only Amnon was dead; and that his death had been determined by Absalom from the day that he forced his sister Tamar.

By that time Jonadab had done speaking, the rest of the king's sons came in; and the king and they, with all the court, wept and lamented very fore.

Absalom mean while made his escape to Talmai, king of Geshur, his mother's father, with whom he lived a voluntary exile three years. In which time, David having mourned daily for his son Amnon, and being now comforted concerning him, seeing he was dead, began to hone after his son Absalom again.

This being observed by Joab (the king's general, and cousin-german to Absalom) he bent his mind to contrive a way to obtain Absalom's pardon, and restore him to the favour of the king his father. Wherefore sending to Tekoa

(a town about fix miles from Jerufalem, where the prophet Amos afterwards lived, Amos i. 1.) he fetched from thence a wife woman; whom, having told her what ſhe ſhould ſay, he deſired to feign herſelf a mourner, and putting on mourning apparel, to go to the king as one that had a long time mourned for the dead.

The woman thus inſtructed, went to the king*, and falling on her face to the ground, to do obeifance to him, ſaid, ‘ Help, O king!’ The king thereupon aſking her what ſhe ailed, ſhe answered, ‘ I am a widow woman, and my husband is dead: and thy handmaid had two ſons, who ſtrove together in the field; and there being none to part them, the one ſmote the other, and ſlew him. And now, ſaid ſhe, the whole family is riſen up againſt thine handmaid, and would have me deliver up him that ſmote his brother, that they may kill him, for the life of his brother whom he ſlew: and ſo deſtroying the heir alſo, they would quench that little ſpark of life which is left to our family, and not leave to my husband either name or remainder upon the earth.’

The king, having heard her complaint and requeſt, bid her go home, and he would give charge concerning her. But this being too general an anſwer, the woman told him ‘ If he would protect her ſon againſt the avengers of blood, the iniquity (of his having killed his brother in the fray) ſhould be upon her and her father’s houſe; and the king and his throne ſhould be guiltleſs.’ Whereupon the king bid her, whoſoever ſhould moleſt her on that occaſion, bring him to him, and he would take ſuch a courſe with him that he ſhould not trouble her any more. This yet was not home enough to reach the caſe; for ſhe aimed at getting a promiſe from him, that he would pardon her ſon: wherefore, to draw the king ſtill further on, ſhe again beſpake him thus, ‘ I pray thee, let the king remember the Lord thy God, that thou ſuffer not the avengers of blood to deſtroy any more, leſt they deſtroy my ſon.’ Upon that the king, to give her aſſurance, ſaid, ‘ As the Lord liveth, there ſhall not one hair of thy ſon fall to the earth.’

The woman now reckoning ſhe had faſt hold of the king by his word, opened the matter plainly to him; letting him know, that under the parable of a widow, mourning for the

* 2 Sam. xiv.

loss of one son, and for the danger of losing the other, she had covertly represented to him the grief of his people for the absence of his son Absalom, and their earnest desire that he might be recalled from banishment.

When the king saw how wilily he had been over-reached, he suspected Joab to have had an hand in the contrivance; and asking the woman, if it were not so, she told him, it was; and that Joab had instructed her what she should say*. Whereupon the king calling for Joab, told him, he had granted Absalom's pardon; and bid him go bring him home again. Joab, returning humble thanks to the king, for having so graciously granted his request, went joyfully to the court of king Talmai at Geshur; and from thence brought Absalom to Jerusalem: but when he was come, the king gave order, that he should go to his own house, and not come to court.

This restraint was uneasy to Absalom. Wherefore, when he had dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and in all that time had not been admitted to the king's presence, he sent for Joab, intending to have sent him to intercede with the king on his behalf: but truly Joab would not come at him. When therefore he had sent for him a second time, and he had again refused to come, Absalom, remembering that Joab had a field of barley lying near to his, bid his servants go set it on fire: which when they had done, Joab quickly came to Absalom, to expostulate the case with him, and to know what the reason was that his servants had fired his field.

Absalom told him he had sent for him that he might send him to the king, to intreat that he might be brought to the king's presence; and then, if the king thought him worthy of death, let him kill him; for he had rather die, than live under this confinement.

Joab then going to the king, and acquainting him how hardly Absalom took it, to be brought from Geshur two years ago, and not to be suffered in so long a time to see him; the king thereupon called for him, who being come, and bowing himself on his face to the ground before the king, was by him received with a kiss; a token of forgiveness and royal favour.

Though Absalom was David's third son, in the order of his birth; Amnon by Ahinoam, and Chileab by Abigail,

* A. M. 2975.

being elder than he, 2 Sam. iii. 2, 3. yet now he seems to be the eldest; Amnon being slain, and Chileab (supposed to be) dead before. This, together with the people's affection to him, made him cast an ambitious eye upon the crown; which he thought himself worthy enough to wear.

For personage he was of such incomparable shape and beauty, that he had no match in all Israel; for from top to toe there was no blemish to be found in him. And he had an head of hair of an almost incredible bigness; for when he cut his hair (which he did once a year, that it might not grow too heavy for him), we read he weighed it at two hundred shekels after the king's weight; which Godwyn computes to be four pound weight and two ounces. Moses and Aaron, p. 298.

Being restored to the king's favour, Absalom had now the fairer opportunities to ingratiate himself with the people; and he took care to lose no occasion.

For first, he put himself in an higher equipage of state and grandeur than was usual*. So that, whereas the king's sons used to ride on mules, as was observed before, chap. xiii. 29. he provided for himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run before him; which were of the nature of a life guard.

Then, to oblige the people, he would get up betimes in the morning, and standing in the way before the palace-gate, when any one that had a controversy with another came to the king for judgment, he would call him to him; and when the man drew nigh to make obeisance to him, he would take him in his arms and kiss him, and discourse familiarly with him about his business, and advise him to look well to it, and see that his cause was rightly stated: but withal, to bring them out of conceit with his father's government, he would lamentingly say, 'But, alas! there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee.' Then, to insinuate himself unto their good opinion, he would add, 'O that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!'

By such evil arts as these, Absalom stole the hearts of the people from the king his father, and won their affections to himself. And when he had thus strengthened himself, he went to the king his father, and asked leave of him to go to Hebron, to pay a vow which he had vowed to the Lord; for

he pretended, that while he was at Geshur in Syria, he had vowed a vow, 'That if the Lord would bring him back in safety to Jerusalem, he would then serve the Lord;' that is, offer a peace-offering unto him: and the good king, not suspecting his son of treachery, gave him leave to go; bidding him, 'Go in peace.'

This is said in the text (2 Sam. xv. 7.) to be after forty years; but from whence to compute them is not plain. They, who would date these forty years from the beginning of David's reign, are too far out: for David, who reigned but forty years in all, reigned divers years after this. Tremellius reads it before, instead of after [*ante finem quadraginta annorum*, before the end of forty years]; but I doubt he makes too bold with the text. More likely it is, that these forty years should commence from the time of Absalom's birth, and so denote his age; and then the sense will be, that he was full forty years old when he laid this plot against his father.

However it was, having obtained the king's leave, Absalom took his journey to Hebron; and with him went out of Jerusalem two hundred choice men, whom he had singled out and invited to his feast, but had not acquainted them with his design: so that they went in their simplicity, not knowing any thing of it. But he sent agents among all their tribes, to sound the minds of the chief men of Israel, and to direct all such as they could gain to his faction, that when they should hear the sound of the trumpet, they should make proclamation among the people, that Absalom reigned in Hebron, in order to gather the people thither to him. In particular, he sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, king David's counsellor, from his city Giloh, in the tribe of Judah, as one whom, for the opinion they had of his wisdom, many would be likely to follow; and, indeed, the conspiracy grew strong: for the people flocked in continually to Absalom.

While disloyal Absalom was thus strengthening himself in his unnatural rebellion, some loyal subject, having got notice of it, came and acquainted king David with it*. And to make him the more sensible of the greatness of the danger, he told him, 'The heart (using the singular number) of the men of Israel was gone after Absalom;' as much as to say, The men of Israel are unanimous, or of one heart, in this defection.

This unexpected and surprising message struck David with so great fear, that his native courage for the present abating, he said to his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, ' Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from ' Absalom. Make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us; and for our sake smite the ' city with the edge of the sword.' They telling him, they were ready to obey his commands; the king (leaving ten women, who were some of his concubines, to keep the house) went forth, and all his household after him; the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and the Gittites (being six hundred men that had followed him from Gath) passing on before him.

Among these David took particular notice of Ittai the Gittite (whom some take to be son to the king of Gath; and who, it seems, was but lately come to him): and David said to him, ' Wherefore goest thou also with us? Return to thy place, and ' abide with the king (so, seeing the people had set him up, he ' called the usurper his rebellious son): for thou, said he, ' art a stranger (and therefore not in any danger) and also ' an exile (whence may be gathered, that he had fled to ' David for protection, as David had formerly done to ' Achish). Inasmuch therefore (said David to him) as thou ' art but new come to us, why should I make thee wander ' about with us, we know not whither? Return thou, and ' take back thy brethren; and mercy and truth be with ' thee.' But the noble Gittite solemnly protesting to the king, that he would run the same adventure with him, whether it were in life or in death, the king bid him then pass over before him: which he did with his men and all the little ones that were with him.

Thus passed they over the brook Kidron (called afterwards Cedron, John xviii. 1. a rivulet that ran between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives) and took their course towards the way of the wilderness, both the king and the people weeping.

Then came Zadok the priest, and all the Levites that were with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God (which they intended to carry with them, as hoping for the greater favour from God, having the ark of his covenant amongst them): and they set it down until the people had done passing out of the city, Abiathar, the other priest, standing by it. But David bid Zadok carry back the ark of God into the city: ' For, said he, if I shall find favour in ' the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me ' both

‘ both it and his habitation (to wit, the tabernacle which I have raised for him). But, if he hath no delight in me, behold, here I am : let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.’

But this was not all ; David aimed at some further advantage by sending back the priests to tarry at Jerusalem. ‘ For, said he to Zadok, art not thou a seer (that is, one whose ministerial function will protect thee from violence, and render thee acceptable to Absalom) ? Return therefore into the city, thou and Abiathar, and your two sons with you (Ahimaaz thy son, and Jonathan his son) and there abide peaceably : and I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there come word from you to certify me how things go.’

Zadok therefore, and Abiathar, carrying the ark of God again to Jerusalem, tarried there. But David, setting forward again, went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, weeping as he went ; and having his head covered, he went barefoot : and all the people that were with him covered every man his head, in token of extreme sorrow (of which, see instances in 2 Sam. xix. 4. and Esther vi. 12.) and wept as they went up.

Being come to the top of the mount, David made a stop there, and worshipped God. And here some conceive he uttered what is contained in the third psalm ; induced so to think, from the inscription of that psalm, which is, ‘ When he fled from Absalom his son.’ But from some expressions in it, especially in the fifth, sixth, and seventh verses, it seems more likely to have been delivered after Absalom’s defeat ; unless we should rather suppose the former part of it to have been uttered at this time while David fled ; and the latter part at his return after the victory ; and so both parts brought afterwards into one psalm.

While David made this halt on the top of the mount, Hushai the Archite, his old friend and counsellor, came to meet him, with his coat rent, and earth upon his head, to shew he sympathized with his master in his sorrow, and to be a partaker with him in his sufferings.

David, willing to make the best advantage of so useful a man, told him, ‘ He would be but a burthen to him, if he should go along with him : but if he returned to the city, and insinuated himself into Absalom’s service and secrets, he might then be of great service to him, in defeating the
‘ counsel

‘counsel of Ahithophel.’ And to encourage him thereunto, he let him know, that he should there have Zadok and Abiathar the priests to assist him; to whom he might communicate whatsoever he could hear or learn out of Absalom’s house; and they might convey it to him by their two sons Ahimaaz and Jonathan.

Hushai thus instructed, and desirous to serve his king where he might do it to the best advantage, returned to Jerusalem, to be there in readiness against Absalom should come thither.

But David, not daring to linger long, went on his way*; and being got a little past the top of the mount, who should meet him but Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, with a couple of saddled asses, and upon them a present of two hundred loaves of bread, an hundred bunches of raisins, with some summer-fruits, and a bottle of wine.

The king asking him what he meant by those things, he replied, ‘The asses are for the king’s household to ride on, and the bread and the fruits for the young men to eat, and the wine for a cordial for such as might happen to faint in the wilderness.’

‘But where,’ said the king, ‘is thy master’s son?’ ‘O,’ said false Ziba, ‘he abides at Jerusalem: for he said, Now shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father.’ The too credulous king, relying on the false information of this treacherous sycophant, past an over-hasty sentence against innocent Mephibosheth, saying to Ziba, ‘Behold, thine are all that pertained to Mephibosheth.’ Whereupon fawning Ziba, bowing himself, besought the king to continue this favour to him.

David still pressing forward, came in a while to Bahurim, a city in the tribe of Benjamin, where he met with a very rude reception: for from thence came forth a man, of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera. Whether this man had been a personal sufferer in the fall of Saul’s family, or what else had exasperated him against David, doth not appear; but a deep offence he had, it seems, conceived against the king, and thought now he might safely vent his malice without danger. Wherefore he came forth, cursing still as he came; and with his cursing, thus he also railed at David: ‘Come out, come out,’ said he, ‘thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial.’ The Lord hath

* 2 Sam. xvi.

‘ returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned: and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son; and behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man.’

Thus as he went along on the side of the hill, over against David, he continued railing and cursing: nor only so, but cast dust, and threw stones also at David, and at all his servants, as they travelled along the way; though all the people, and the mighty men of war, were on either hand of him.

This so provoked Abishai, David’s nephew, that he said to his uncle, ‘ Why should this dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.’ But David, conscious to himself of his own guilt in the case of Uriah, 2 Sam. xi. and of God’s judgment denounced against him for it, chap. xii. ver. 11. saw and acknowledged the just hand of God in all this; and submitting to it, said, in dislike of his cousin Abishai’s offer, ‘ What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah! So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David: who then shall say, Wherefore hast thou done so? Alas, said he to Abishai, and to all his servants, ye see my son, who came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more then may this Benjamite do what he hath done? Let him alone, and let him curse, seeing the Lord hath bidden him: it may be the Lord will look on my affliction, and will requite me good for his cursing.’

While David was thus entertained at Bahurim, Absalom and the men of Israel that were with him, being come, with Ahithophel, to Jerusalem, Hushai presented himself to him, with congratulatory acclamations, crying out, ‘ God save the king! God save the king!’ Which ambiguous speech might be applied either way, to Absalom, or to David.

Absalom, well knowing Hushai to have been an intimate friend, and counsellor to his father, played a little ironically on him, saying, ‘ Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Why wentest thou not with thy friend?’ Hushai replied, ‘ Nay, but whom the Lord and this people, and all the men of Israel choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide.’ In which still he left room for an application to David, whom the Lord and all Israel had undoubtedly chosen; which could not be truly said of Absalom. And although, to take from

Absalom

Abfalom all suspicion of him, and beget in him a confidence of his fidelity, he added, 'Whom should I serve? As I have served in thy father's presence, so will I be in thy presence:' yet he might thereby mean (and no doubt did) to serve the father still, by giving wrong counsel to the son, and by discovering the counsels of the son to the father.

Hushai having thus wrought himself in among them, Abfalom, that he might not lose time, said, 'Give counsel among you what we shall do.' This, though spoken to them all, he directed more particularly to Ahithophel, who had been a prime counsellor to David, and was of that repute in those days, that his counsel was regarded, as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God.

Ahithophel, well knowing the danger he should be in, if a reconciliation should be made between the father and the son, gave such politick, but wicked counsel, as he concluded would hinder all accommodation between them. He advised Abfalom, therefore, in the first place, to take those women, his father's concubines, which he had left to keep the house, and openly lie with them before the people; alledging, that when all Israel should hear how much, by that means, he had incensed his father, despairing of pardon, they would stick close to him. This counsel suited Abfalom well: and a tent being spread on the top of the house (which, as was noted before, was flat-roofed) Abfalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

In the next place, Ahithophel advised a speedy pursuit after David, before he should get into any strong place, or have time to raise any considerable forces*. 'Let me now,' said he unto Abfalom, choose out twelve thousand men; and I will arise and pursue after David this night: and I will come upon him while he is weary and weak-handed, and put him and his men into such a fright, that all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only, and bring back all the people to thee in peace.'

This was the most pernicious counsel that could have been given against David, and the most unnatural: yet this pleased graceless Abfalom well, and the elders too of Israel that were engaged in his faction. But, as God would have it, Abfalom, before he would put it in action, bid them call Hushai also, that he might hear likewise what he would say.

* 2 Sam. xvii.

When Hushai was come, Absalom said unto him, ' Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we follow his counsel? If not, speak thou.' Hushai, that he might not seem to slight Ahithophel, replied, ' The counsel that Ahithophel hath given (though in the general he be a very able counsellor) is not good at this time: for, said Hushai to Absalom, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: so that such a small force as thou canst now send will not be able to match them; and if by that means thou shouldest receive but a small overthrow now at the first, it would quickly be reported abroad, that there is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom. And if once that possess the minds of the people, the most hardy and valiant amongst thy followers will be discouraged: for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and that they which be with him are valiant men. And whereas Ahithophel proposes to seize thy father in his quarters by night, and kill him only, he doth not consider that thy father is a man of war, and so well acquainted with the policies of war, that he will not lodge with the people; and, no doubt, he is hid now in some pit, or other private place. Wherefore, my counsel is, That all Israel be generally gathered together, from one end of the land to the other; and that having raised an army, like the sands of the sea for multitude, thou march thyself, in thine own person, at the head of them, for their greater encouragement: so shall we come upon him as the dew upon the ground; and of him, and of all the men that are with him, not leave one. And if he should be gotten into a city, we shall be enough to draw that city with ropes into the river.'

So well did Hushai deliver himself on this occasion, that he won Absalom and the chief men of his party to his opinion; inasmuch that they all agreed and declared, ' That the counsel of Hushai was better than the counsel of Ahithophel.' For, indeed, the Lord had determined to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel, which Absalom before thought good, and was most conducive to his design; to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom.

But Ahithophel, who was not wont to meet with a repulse, and could not brook that the counsel of another should be preferred to his, took it so hardly that his counsel was not

followed, that mounting his ass, he gat him home; and having put his household in order, hanged himself.

Meanwhile, Hushai, having wisely diverted the present storm from his master David, took the first opportunity to acquaint Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, both what Ahithophel had counselled, and what counsel himself had given; desiring them to send with all speed to David; and advise him not to lodge that night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily pass over Jordan, lest he should have been swallowed up, and all the people that were with him. For though Hushai had for the present put by the pursuit, which Ahithophel had advised, yet not knowing how soon Absalom's mind might alter, he was not willing the king should run that hazard.

Zadok and Abiathar had posted their two sons, Jonathan and Ahimaaz, at En-rogel, a well or fountain without Jerusalem. For they thought it not safe for them, who were to be the messengers between Hushai and the king, to be within the city; lest they might be prevented from coming forth. To them, therefore, this message being conveyed by a young damsel, they speeded away with it to king David. But it unhappily happened, that a young lad seeing them go off, went and told Absalom, who presently sent some after them, to seize them, and bring them back.

But they, perceiving they were pursued, made such haste that they reached Bahurim; and going to a man's house there that had a well in his court, they went down into it. And the woman of the house, that the well might not be seen, took a coverlid, and spreading it over the mouth of the well, laid ground corn thereon, as if it wanted airing. By that time this was done, came Absalom's servants to the house, in quest of them; and asking the woman where they were, she told them, 'They were gone over the brook of water:' whereupon the pursuers went on as she directed them; but when they had sought and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem.

As soon as they had notice that the coast was clear, Jonathan and Ahimaaz coming up out of the well, went on to king David, and acquainted him, both what counsel Ahithophel had given against him, and Hushai's advice; that he should pass quickly over the river. Whereupon David, drawing out his men, hastened away to Jordan; and by the break

break of day next morning, he, and all the people that were with him, were got to the other side of the river.

Then marching on to Mahanaim (a city in the tribe of Gad, built in the place where Jacob was met by the angels of God in his return from his father Laban, Gen. xxxii. 1, 2.) he there made a stand. And while he staid there, Shobi, the son of Nahash of Rabbah, of the children of Ammon (who probably was a tributary prince to David, since his subduing the Ammonites, 2 Sam. xii. 26.) and Machir (the son of Ammiel of Lodebar) brother-in-law to king David, if (as is supposed) this Ammiel be the same that was father to Bathsheba, David's wife, 1 Chron. iii. 5.) and Barzillai, the Gileadite of Rogelim, brought in provisions of several sorts, to refresh the king and his people that were with him, who were hungry and thirsty, as well as weary.

But it was not long before Absalom, having raised a great army, passed over Jordan in pursuit of his father; he and all the men of Israel with him, and pitched in the land of Gilead. And because Joab was gone along with king David, Absalom made Amasa captain of his host instead of Joab, to whom he was cousin-german. For Amasa was the son of one Ithra (called also Jether, an Ishmaelite by nation, 1 Chron. ii. 17. but an Israelite by profession of religion) who begat Amasa on Abigail, sister of Zeruah, Joab's mother.

When king David saw that his son Absalom was come over Jordan against him, and that there was no remedy, but that it must come to a pitched battle between them, he numbered the people that were with him; * and setting captains of thousands, and of hundreds, over them, he divided them into three battalions. Of these he gave to Joab the command of one; to Abishai, Joab's brother, the command of another; and to Ittai the Gittite the command of the third; intending to go with them himself also.

But the people would not suffer that. 'For, said they, 'if we be put to flight, they will not care for us; neither will they regard it, if half of us be slain: for they had rather destroy thee, than ten thousand of us. Therefore it is better that thou stay, and relieve us out of the city.'

The king willing, at that time especially, to please his people, and perhaps not very earnest to engage in person

* 2 Sam. v. li.

against his son, answered, 'He would do what they thought 'best.' Then standing by the gate as the people went out by hundreds, and by thousands, he gave a great charge to his three generals, and all the captains, in the hearing of the people, that for his sake they should deal gently with the young man Absalom.

As soon as the two armies met, they joined battle in a wood belonging to the tribe of Manasseh (called here, 'The wood of Ephraim,' because, as some think, the Ephraimites drove their cattle over Jordan, to feed them in this wood. But others, with more probability, suppose it to be called the wood of Ephraim, from the great slaughter which Jephthah had formerly made of the Ephraimites in that place, *Judg. xii.*) And though Absalom's army was, in all likelihood, much superior to David's in number; yet God, who raised this storm against David for his exercise, not for his destruction, cast the victory on David's side; so that the people of Israel, who followed Absalom, were slain before the servants of David, to the number of twenty thousand men. And more might have fallen, had not Absalom himself (for whose sake they engaged) been taken and slain. For he, to avoid the soldiers of David, rode under the thick boughs of an oak; and his head being caught in the oak, he was so entangled with his great bush of hair amongst the boughs, that his mule which he rode on going away from under him, he was left hanging there between heaven and earth, not able to disentangle himself.

One that saw him in this posture, went and told Joab that he had seen Absalom hanging in an oak. Joab blaming him that he had not killed him, told him, 'If he had, he 'would have given him ten shekels of silver, and a military belt:' which was sometimes given in war to such as atchieved some honourable exploit.

The soldier, excusing himself upon the king's command, given in the hearing of the whole army, to spare Absalom, told Joab, 'He would not have put forth his hand against 'the king's son, though any one would have laid him a 'thousand shekels in his hand.'

Joab, not willing to lose time, soon brake off the discourse; and taking three darts in his hand, went to the place where he understood Absalom was, * and thrust them

through his heart while he was yet alive in the oak. And to make sure work, ten young men, that bare Joab's armour, compassing Absalom about, smote him and slew him.

This done, Joab immediately, to prevent any further effusion of blood, founded a retreat. Whereupon the king's people returning from the pursuit, gave Absalom's men opportunity by flight to escape home.

Then taking the body of Absalom, they cast it into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him.

Such was the end, such the burial, such the monument of this ambitious prince, and rebellious son; who, in his lifetime, considering that he had no son living (though he had had three, 2 Sam. xiv. 27.) to keep his name in remembrance, had reared up for himself a pillar, in a place called 'The king's dale,' not far from Jerusalem, and had called that pillar after his own name.

Ahimaaz, son of Zadok the priest, was ambitious to have carried the good news of this victory to king David; and therefore desired Joab to let him run and bear the king tidings, how that the Lord had avenged him of his enemies. But Joab, out of a kind respect to the young man, because he knew the news would not be welcome to David, put him by, with telling him he should bear tidings another time when occasion might offer; but at that time he was not willing to employ him, because the king's son was dead.

Then turning to Cush, an Ethiopian, but servant to David, he bid him, 'Go, tell the king what he had seen.' Whereupon Cush, bowing himself to Joab, set forward.

Ahimaaz, still desirous to go on the errand, intreated Joab to let him run also, though it were after Cush. 'Wherefore, said Joab, wouldest thou run, my son, seeing thou hast no acceptable tidings?' Yet upon his pressing him the third time, Joab gave Ahimaaz leave to go, who, taking the way by the plain, out-ran Cush, and got in before him.

Mean while David sat between the two gates of the city Mahanaim, in a doubtful expectation of the event of this battle. And a watchman being on the roof, over the gate upon the wall, gave notice that he saw a man coming, running alone. 'If he be alone, said the king, he brings tidings.'

As they drew near, the watchman cried out that he saw another man coming, running also alone. Him likewise the king concluded to be a bringer of tidings. And understanding by the watchman, that the foremost of them did run like Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, the king said, 'He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings.'

As soon as Ahimaaz came within call, he said aloud to the king, 'All is well.' Then drawing nearer, he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, 'Blessed be the Lord thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king.' This was good news in general. But, said the king, 'Is the young man Absalom safe?' Ahimaaz, not willing to be the messenger of that ill part of the news, told the king, 'That when Joab sent Cush and him away, he saw a great tumult, but he knew not what the particular occasion was.'

Presently upon this came Cush in, crying, 'Tidings, my lord the king: for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee.' But, said the king to him also, 'Is the young man Absalom safe?' 'The enemies, answered Cush, of my lord the king, and all they that rise up to do thee hurt, be as that young man is.'

That word was enough; the king understood it: and being greatly moved for the death of his son, he went up to the chamber over the gate to weep; and as he went, he vented his grief in this mournful exclamation, 'O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!' Wherein, it is probable, not only paternal affection moved, but the sense of his son's rebellious sin, and of the quick judgment of God upon him for it, raised his passion to so high a pitch.

The king's thus mourning for Absalom, turned the victory (or the triumph for the victory) into mourning unto all the people: for they, hearing how the king was grieved for his son, gat them by stealth into the city, as people who are ashamed steal away when they flee in battle*.

This being observed by Joab, who was a man of more courage than compassion, and thought this carriage of the king's favoured too much of pusillanimity, he went into the house to the king (who having covered his head in token of grief, was still crying out with a loud voice, 'O my son

* 2 Sam. xix.

' Absalom,

‘ Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son !)’ and with a soldiery boldness, and freedom of speech, told him, ‘ Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, who this day, with the hazard of their own lives, have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons, and of thy daughters, of thy wives, and of thy concubines; in that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends: for (by this behaviour of thine) thou hast declared, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants. And I now perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, it had pleased thee well. Now, therefore, arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the Lord, if thou goest not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night; and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that hath befallen thee from thy youth until now.’

This bold speech (more necessary, perhaps, than decent) roused the king out of his bewailing fit. And being a wise prince, that knew how and when to comply with his subjects, he arose and went down, and sat in the gate, as his usual manner had been, both to gratify his people with his presence, and to hear and redress their grievances. And a good effect it had: for as soon as the people heard that the king was come forth in publick again, they all hastened to appear before him. For the Israelites that had sided with Absalom, had (upon the defeat) fled every man to his tent. But now that they who had driven the king away might shew their forwardness to bring him back, the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying one to another, ‘ The king hath often saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and particularly out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land because of Absalom. But seeing Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle, why, therefore, do ye not now speak a word of bringing the king back?’

This return of affection in the people of Israel towards their king soon came to the king’s ear; which as it could not choose but please him, so he was not a little troubled at the backwardness of the men of Judah; from whom, as being his own tribe and family, he expected more regard. Wherefore, to stir them up, he sent to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, willing them to speak unto the elders of Judah, as from him; and say unto them, ‘ Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house? For the speech of all
‘ Israel

‘ Israel is come to the king about it, before ye speak a word
 ‘ of it; although ye are my brethren, my bones, and my
 ‘ flesh: what is the matter that ye are so backward to bring
 ‘ home the king?’

And to sweeten Amasa, who had been Absalom’s general, he not only bid them put him in mind of his near relation to him, as being his sister’s son, and so of his bone, and of his flesh; but authorized them also to give him assurance from him, that he would make him captain of his host in the room of Joab.

For though David concealed, as well as he could, his resentment; yet Joab had much lost his favour: for he had divers times not a little displeased him; as in the murder of Abner formerly, in his killing Absalom now, contrary to the king’s express command, and in his late over bold reproof of the king. But this not being a time for the king to express his displeasure in, he carried himself very obligingly to all his people: by which means he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, so that they unanimously petitioned him to return, with all his servants; and came to meet him at Gilgal, to conduct him over Jordan.

With these came Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjamite of Bahurim, who had so railed at and cursed David as he fled; who seeing the tide now turned, Absalom dead, his party routed, and king David returning in peace and in triumph, made haste with the foremost to come down to meet the king, and to beg his pardon, having a thousand men of Benjamin with him, perhaps to intercede for him.

As soon, therefore, as the king was come over Jordan, Shimei fell down before him, and said, ‘ Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me: neither remember that which thy
 ‘ servant did perversly, in the day that my lord the king
 ‘ went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to heart:
 ‘ for thy servant doth know that I have sinned. Therefore,
 ‘ behold, I am come down the first this day of all the house
 ‘ of Joseph, to meet my lord the king.’ Where, by [the house of Joseph] is understood the three tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, which made up the third rank in their military marchings, and in which Ephraim, Joseph’s son, had the first place, Numb. ii. 18 to 25.

Abishai, Joab’s brother and the king’s nephew (who being present when this man reviled the king, would fain have struck off his head then, 2 Sam. xvi. 9.) was highly offended with Shimei; and fearing lest his uncle’s lenity should be wrought

wrought upon to grant him his pardon upon this submission, interposed, saying, ' Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord's anointed ?'

But David, eying the just hand of God in what had befallen him, and resolving to re-ingratiate himself with his people by acts of clemency, gave Abishai this sharp rebuke ; ' What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me ? Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel ? For do not I know, that I am this day king over Israel ?' Wherein he seemed to express a sense of the great danger he was so lately in of losing his kingdom, and of the favour of both God and the people to him, in restoring him again to his kingly dignity ; and therefore, it being a day of gladness and thankfulness, it ought not to be stained with bloody executions. Then turning to Shimei, he said, and confirmed it to him by an oath, ' Thou shalt not die.' Which expression (considering what direction David gave to his son Solomon concerning him, 1 Kings ii. 9. and his execution thereupon, ver. 45.) had need be taken with some limitation ; and perhaps is best explained by David's own words in the place fore-quoted, where reciting the whole passage of Shimei's cursing him, and coming afterwards to meet him and beg his pardon, ver. 8. he gives his own words thus, viz. ' I swear to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword.'

Among those that came to congratulate the king's return, and attend him over Jordan, false Ziba was one, who, fearing his treachery to his master Mephibosheth would be discovered, came very officiously, with his fifteen sons and twenty servants, to wait on the king, and conduct him homewards.

As for Mephibosheth, he, poor man, had been so true a mourner for the king's affliction, that he had neither dressed his feet (though he was lame of them) nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed, until the day he came again in peace. And not being able for lameness to travel, he was forced to stay till the king came to Jerusalem : and then going to welcome him home, the king remembering what Ziba had told him, asked him, ' Wherefore he went not with him ?' To which he replied, ' My lord, O king ! my servant deceived me : for I ordered him to saddle me an ass, that (being unable to walk, because thy servant is lame) I might ride thereon, and go
' to

‘ to the king, but he failed me ; and not only so, but hath
‘ also slandered thy servant unto my lord the king. But my
‘ lord the king is as an angel of God to discern my inno-
‘ cency (and my servant’s treachery) : do therefore what
‘ thou seest good. For all my father’s household were but
‘ dead men (in law) before my lord the king ; yet didst thou
‘ set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table :
‘ what right, therefore, have I yet to cry any more unto the
‘ king ?’

As David had too credulously hearkened to Ziba when he
falsely accused his master, and over-hastily condemning Me-
phibosheth unheard, gave all his estate to his dishonest ser-
vant Ziba ; so now, though he admitted of Mephibosheth’s
excuse, and seemed well satisfied of his innocency, yet he
did him right but by halves. ‘ Why speakest thou, said he,
‘ any more of thy matters ? I have said thou and Ziba di-
‘ vide the land.’ Thus made he Ziba partner with his
master, and rewarded the false servant with half the estate of
his innocent master, who, for falsely accusing his master, de-
served rather punishment. But good Mephibosheth was so
far from complaining or repining at this hard and unequal
sentence, that he cheerfully replied, ‘ Yea, let him take all,
‘ since my lord the king is come home again to his house in
‘ peace.’

We heard before, that Barzillai the Gileadite was one of
those that supplied the king with furniture and provisions for
himself and his men, while he was at Mahanaim. And now
that the king was to return, he came down himself from Ro-
gelim, where he dwelt, though he was a very aged man, to
conduct the king over Jordan. And having brought him
over the river, the king, in grateful remembrance of his
good services, invited him to go along with him to Jerusa-
lem, and spend the remainder of his days with him there,
that he might have opportunity to requite his kindness.

Barzillai, excusing himself by his great age, pleasantly an-
swered the king, ‘ How long can I expect to live, that I
‘ should go up with the king to Jerusalem ? I am this day
‘ fourscore years old ; and can I discern between good and
‘ evil ? Can thy servant taste what I eat, or what I drink ?
‘ Can I hear any more the voice of singing men and of sing-
‘ ing women ? Wherefore then should thy servant be yet a
‘ burden to my lord the king ? Thy servant will go a little
‘ way over Jordan with the king ; but why should the king
‘ recompence

‘ recompence it me with such a reward? Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried in the grave of my father and my mother: but behold thy servant Chimham (my son) let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee.’

‘ That he shall, replied the king, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: for whatsoever thou shalt require of me, that will I do for thee.’ Then kissing Barzillai, and blessing him, he dismissed him, to return to his own place; but Chimham his son went along with the king; the people of Judah, and part of the people of Israel, conducting the king from Jordan to Gilgal.

And now arose an emulatory quarrel between the men of Israel and the men of Judah. For that part of Israel that had followed Absalom, to redeem their credit with the king, came to him at Gilgal, with a complaint against the men of Judah, saying, ‘ Why have our brethren, the men of Judah, stole thee away, and have brought the king and his household, and all his men with him, over Jordan?’

The men of Judah answered them, ‘ Because the king is near of kin to us (David, indeed, was so: but the king was no nearer of kin to them than to all the rest of his faithful subjects). Wherefore then, said the men of Judah, be ye angry for this matter? Have we eaten at all at the king’s cost? Or hath he given us any gift?’ As much as to say, we did it not for self-interest, or to get preferment at court; but out of affection and duty.

‘ But, replied the men of Israel, we being ten tribes of the twelve, have ten parts in the king, so that we have more right in David than ye. Why then did ye despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king?’ Thus they grew hot one against the other: but the words of the men of Judah (as having the better cause, in that they stuck to their king when the others left him) were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

This disgusted those men of Israel who were not well settled in their allegiance before, and prepared them to receive any new impression; which being observed by a factious fellow, one Sheba, the son of Bichri a Benjamite, who happened to be there at that time, he took hold of the advantage to raise a sedition, and blowing a trumpet, cried out,
‘ We

‘ We have no part in David ; neither have we inheritance
 ‘ in the son of Jesse : every man to his tents, O Israel !’

Upon this, those malecontents of Israel deserted their king, and followed Sheba : * but the men of Judah clave unto their king, and conducted him from Jordan to Jerusalem. Whither being come, king David took the ten women, his concubines (whom he had left to keep the house, chap. xv. 16. and whom Absalom had defiled, chap. xvi. 22.) and putting them in ward, maintained them there, not using them any more as concubines ; but condemning them to perpetual widowhood, kept them shut up to the day of their death.

Then calling for his nephew Amasa (whom he had made captain of his forces, chap. xix. 13) he commanded him to muster the men of Judah, and bring them to him within three days. Amasa forthwith went about it ; but tarrying longer than the time allowed him, David, who knew the danger of delay, said to Abishai, ‘ Now will Sheba, the son
 ‘ of Bichri, do us more harm than did Absalom. There-
 ‘ fore, take thou, said he to Abishai, thy lord’s servants, and
 ‘ pursue after Sheba ; lest he get him fenced cities, and es-
 ‘ cape us.’

Abishai thereupon taking to him his brother Joab’s men, with all the Cherethites and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men, led them forth out of Jerusalem in pursuit of Sheba ; and by that time they were come to the great stone in Gibeon, Amasa met them, and led the forces on.

Joab was with his brother Abishai and the men of war : and having his sword girded upon his soldier’s coat, as he went along it dropped out of the scabbard, so that he had it naked in his hand ; which Amasa, not suspecting any treachery or hurt, did not heed. Coming up then to Amasa, whom, for the loss of his place, he had a pique at, he familiarly saluted him, asking him how he did ; and taking him by the beard to kiss him, thrust his sword into him, so that his bowels fell out upon the ground, and with that one stroke killed him. Then, leaving one of his servants to direct the people to come after him, he, with his brother Abishai, followed the pursuit after Sheba. But Amasa lying wallowing in his blood in the midst of the highway, the people, as they came on thither, stood still there, struck with

the sight of so horrible a spectacle; which Joab's servant observing, he removed the corpse out of the highway into the field, and covered it with a cloth. Which done, the people went on after Joab in pursuit of Sheba.

He, having run through the tribes of Israel, had gathered together the Berites, who were of his own tribe, the tribe of Benjamin; and finding himself pursued, got into Abel (a city in the tribe of Manasseh, called, for distinction sake, Abel-Beth-Maachah, or the House of Maachah, from Maachah the wife of Machir the father of Gilead, 1 Chron. vii. 15.)

Thither Joab and Abishai, with their men, pursued him, and there besieged him; and casting up a bank against the city, they battered the wall to throw it down.

Mean while, a wise woman among the besieged calling to the besiegers from the wall of the city, desired them to intreat Joab to come near, that she might speak to him: when he came, she handsomely put him in mind, that by a long prescription of time, it had been a custom, drawn from the law of God, Deut xx. 10. to offer a friendly treaty of peace before they made war. But that, though she and her fellow-citizens were of Israel, and were peaceable and loyal subjects to the king of Israel; yet he, forgetting this custom and law, sought to destroy them, without giving them a reason: and thereupon she asked him, 'Wherefore he would swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?'

Joab, startled at this, answered, 'Far it be from me, that I should swallow up or destroy. No, no: the matter is not so intended. But a man of mount Ephraim, Sheba, the son of Bichri, by name, hath taken up arms against the king, even against David. Deliver him only,' said Joab, and I will depart from the city.'

The woman replied, 'If that be all, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall.' And forthwith calling the governors of the city together, she, in her wisdom, so managed the matter with them, that they cut off the head of Sheba, and cast it over the wall to Joab. Whereupon Joab immediately raised his siege; and sounding a retreat, returned to the king at Jerusalem.

And now that these two rebellions were quelled, and the state restored to quietness again, the court was new modelled, and the chief ministers and officers were settled

anew. For Joab having (though treacherously) removed his competitor Amasa, obtained the captain-generalship over all the host of Israel; Benaiah, the son Jehoiadah, as captain of the guards, was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; Adoram was treasurer; Jehoshaphat, the son of Ahilud, was recorder; Sheva was secretary of state; Zadok and Abiathar were the priests; and one Ira, a Jarite, was in principal favour with the king.

David had also a royal army, consisting of three hundred thousand men, who being divided, according to the number of the months in the year, into twelve brigades or bands, each consisting of four and twenty thousand men, besides officers, were so disposed, that in times of peace each band, according to their settled courses, was a month upon duty, and then was relieved by the next, till every band, taking its turn, had served a month in the year. But, in time of war, they were all in a readiness to be drawn forth, as occasion might require.

Of their order and course of serving, with the names of the principal commanders, account is given in 1 Chron. xxvii. whither I refer the reader. There also the names of the chief rulers of the several tribes, and of the king's privy-counsellors, and officers over his domestick affairs, are particularly set down. As are likewise the names of his principal captains, and most renowned warriors; with brief touches of some of their most memorable exploits, recorded in 2 Sam. xxiii. and 1 Chron. xi whither also I direct the reader, that I may spare the transcribing hither all the instances there given. Yet one being very extraordinary for affectionate loyalty, as well as adventurous valour, on the one hand, and princely piety on the other, I willingly insert here; which was thus:

While David had war with the Philistines, their host encamping in the valley of Rephaim, betwixt him and Bethlehem, where also they had a garrison, David, being then in an hold at the cave Adullam, longed for water out of the well that was by the gate of Bethlehem, and said, 'O that one would give me of that water to drink!' Which wish of his, three of his chief captains hearing, they brake through the host of the Philistines, and drawing water out of the well of Bethlehem, brought it to David. But when David had it, he would not drink of it; but pouring it out unto the Lord, he said, 'Far be it from me, O Lord! that I should

‘ should do this: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy?’ For with the hazard of their lives they brought it, 2 Sam. xxiii. 15, 16, 17.

It was not long after this, before another, and that more general, calamity befel Israel: for there arose a famine, which held three years successively. The long continuance of this famine made David take it for a divine judgment; and inquiring of the Lord for what reason it was sent, the Lord answered, ‘ That it was for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites,’ 2 Sam. xxi. 1.

These Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites: yet Joshua and the princes of Israel, beguiled by their false pretences, had made a league with them, and confirmed it to them by oath, whereby they had granted them their lives. And although this league was fraudulently obtained, yet being made, and solemnly sworn to before the Lord, it was not to be broken. And therefore Joshua and the princes of Israel, though they otherwise punished the Gibeonites for deceiving them, yet they kept the league inviolably, and would not suffer the Israelites to touch them. Neither was this league violated during the times of the judges that succeeded Joshua, for more than three hundred years, till Saul’s time, who, it seems, in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah, slew the poor Gibeonites: though when, where, how, or why, this slaughter was committed, is not particularly set down in Scripture, so far as I observe. Neither was this a general slaughter, or total extirpation of them: for David had recourse hereupon to the Gibeonites, to offer them satisfaction; which shews they remained a people. But Saul, by killing some of them, had broken the league, and violated the oath of God: for which divine vengeance was come upon Israel in general calamity. For even kingdoms sometimes suffer for the sins which kings, in their kingly capacity, commit. Thus forty years after Manasseh was dead, Judah suffered under Nebuchadnezzar for the sins of Manasseh their king, 2 Kings xxiv. 3.

Now when David understood that this famine was sent for the sake of those Gibeonites whom Saul had slain, he asked the chief of the Gibeonites, ‘ What he should do for them: And wherewith he should make the atonement,

* 2 Sam. xxi.

‘ that they might bless the inheritance of the Lord.’ For the curse, even of a Gibeonite, for injustice done, or his blessing for justice executed, is of more force than is commonly apprehended.

The Gibeonites answered the king, ‘ We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house ; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel : but the man that consumed us, and devised against us that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel, let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up before the Lord in Gibeah of Saul, whom the Lord did choose.’

The king told them he would give them to them. And considering where to take them, he resolved, however, to spare Mephibosheth the grandson of Saul, because of the Lord’s oath that had passed between Jonathan and him, and the intire affection and high friendship that had been between them. Wherefore, having little choice, he took Armoni and another Mephibosheth, two sons of Saul, which he had by Rizpah his concubine ; and with them the five sons of Merab, the elder daughter of Saul (for whom, in the text, Michal, his younger daughter, is set by mistake) and delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, who hanged them all seven together before the Lord, in the hill called Gibeah of Saul.

It was the beginning of barley-harvest when this execution was made ; and Rizpah (the mother of two of them) that she might preserve the dead bodies from being preyed upon by the fowls in the day-time, or the beasts by night, took sackcloth and spread it for herself upon the rock, from the beginning of the harvest, until water dropped upon them out of heaven ; which being a token that God was appeased, the bodies might then be taken down.

When David heard of the pious care which Rizpah the concubine of Saul had shewed for preserving the dead bodies of Saul’s sons, he took the bones of Saul and of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh-Gilead (who had long before stolen them from the street of Bethshan, where the Philistines hanged them after Saul was slain in Gilboa) and caused them, together with the bones of those seven who were now hanged, to be buried at Zelah in the country of Benjamin, in the sepulchre of Kish the father of Saul. And after that, the Lord was intreated for the land : and
by

by sending rain, which produced plenty, and removed the dearth, which want of the rain had caused, declared that he had accepted the atonement which had been made.

But trials and exercises still attended David; and scarce was he freed from pinching famine, when he was again engaged in war: for the Philistines, who of all the enemies Israel then had, seem to have been the most restless and unwearied, provoked him to battle.

David therefore drawing forth his forces, joined battle with them; and the fight continuing long, David waxed faint. Which being observed by Ishbibenob (who was one of the sons of the giant, and brother to Goliath, whom David in single combat had slain; a man of that extraordinary strength, that the head of his spear weighed three hundred shekels of brass;) he, being girded with a new sword, pressed upon David to have slain him. But Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, David's nephew, interposing, succoured David, and slew the Philistine.

David's men observing this, were so sensible of the danger the king had been in, that they resolved not to run the like hazard again. And, therefore, in their affectionate zeal for his safety, they plainly told him, binding it with an oath, that he should go no more to battle with them; lest (as they expressed their loyal affection by an high metaphor) he should quench the light of Israel. Whereby they intended to set forth what confusion and disorder they should be left in, like men in the dark, in case he should be slain in the field.

The loss of this giant did not so discourage the Philistines, but that they prepared for battle again; and at a place called Gob, or Gezer, where Sibbichai the Hushathite (who was one of David's mighty men, captain of the eighth division or band for the eighth month, having four and twenty thousand men under his command, 1 Chron. xxvii. 11.) slew Saph, or Sippai, who was of the sons of the giant: whereby the Philistines were at that time beaten also, 1 Chron. xx. 4

But they quickly rallied, and offered battle again in the same place. And then Elhanan a Bethlehemite, another of David's worthies, slew Lahmi, the brother of Goliath the Gittite, a man of that exceeding stature and strength, that the staff of his spear also was (as his brother's had been) like a weaver's beam.

Yet were not the Philistines so subdued, but that a while after they joined battle again in Gath, having in their army another of the giant's sons, who was not only a man of great stature, but was monstrous in his limbs or members; for he had on each hand six fingers, and on each foot six toes. But when he defied Israel, a nephew of David's, whose name was Jonathan (the son of Shimea, David's brother) slew him.

Thus fell these four mighty men for stature and strength, who were born to the giant in Gath; by whose fall the Philistines probably were so weakened or dismayed, that we hear of no more action from them during the remainder of David's reign.

And now upon this deliverance, not only of his person from the late danger he had been in, but of his kingdom also from all hostilities, both civil and foreign, David, in a thankful sense of the goodness and favour of God to him, in freeing him at length from all his enemies, as he had done from Saul long before, spake (or sang) unto the Lord that excellent song, composed of acknowledgments, thanksgivings, and praises, which is delivered in 2 Sam. xxii. and makes the eighteenth psalm.

But David's troubles were not yet over; for the anger of the Lord was again kindled against Israel through David's means,* and that brought great trouble to David. The occasion was this.

Though David was grown old, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies; yet the restless enemy to goodness, and to all good men, stirred up in David a vain curiosity to know the strength of his kingdom; and in order thereunto moved and provoked him to number Israel. Hereupon David commanded the general of his forces, and the other captains of his host, to go through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba (that is, from one end of the land to the other) and number the people; giving no another reason for it, but that he might know the number of them.

The snare which David did not see, Joab did; and would have diverted the king from it. To which end, in a more modest and humble strain than was usual with him, he expostulated the matter with the king thus:

* 2 Sam. xxiv. 1 Chron. xxi. A. M. 2987.

“The Lord thy God make the people, how many soever they be, an hundred times so many more as they be, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it: but since they are all (whether few or many) my lord the king’s servants, why doth my lord require this thing? Why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?”

But notwithstanding all that Joab and the rest of the captains of the host urged against it, the king was resolutely bent to have it done; and his word prevailed against them all. About it therefore they went, though unwillingly; and having spent nine months and twenty days in traversing the land, from end to end, and side to side, they returned to Jerusalem, and Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people to the king.

But the account is differently related. For in 2 Sam. xxiv. 9. the sum given in, is eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword in Israel, and five hundred thousand in Judah. Whereas in 1 Chron. xxi. 5. the sum given in for Israel, is eleven hundred thousand, and for Judah but four hundred threescore and ten thousand: so that this latter account has three hundred thousand more than the former in Israel, and thirty thousand less than the former in Judah. But it may be considered, that Joab, through a dislike of the work gave over numbering, and left it unfinished, 1 Chron. xxi. 6. and xxvii. 24. which might occasion the different accounts, brought in by some more fully, by others more sparingly.

No sooner was the account given in, but David was sensible of his error. He needed not now, as in the case of Uriah and Bathsheba formerly, be convicted by a parable; he was convicted in himself. His heart smote him, and made him break forth into an acknowledgment of his sin, and a deprecation of it: “I have sinned greatly, said he to the Lord, in that I have done: and now I beseech thee, O Lord! take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.”

The nature of David’s sin is not particularly set down that I observe. But besides his presumption in desiring to know, that he might glory in the number and strength of his people, and his doing it in an arbitrary way, without any reason or cause, but merely to gratify his own will, he is supposed by some to have transgressed in not raising the Lord’s tribute upon the people when they were numbered,

bered, according to an express law, Exod. xxx. 12, 13. whereby it was provided, that when the people were numbered, they should, every man from twenty years old and above, pay half a sanctuary shekel (which is valued of our money fifteen pence) as an atonement and ransom for their lives, that there might no plague come among them; which money was to be appropriated to the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. And the sum raised thereby, upon the first numbering of the people in the wilderness, amounted to an hundred talents, and a thousand seven hundred threescore and fifteen shekels of the sanctuary; which (reckoning a talent at three hundred and seventy-five pounds, and a shekel at two shillings and sixpence) comes to (if I have not mistaken in the reduction) thirty-seven thousand seven hundred twenty-one pounds seventeen shillings and sixpence. Yet others, I know, are of opinion, that this capitation or poll-tax was not to be raised upon every numbering of the people.

But wherein soever the weight of David's sin in this case lay, the punishment was left to his own choice. For in the morning, by that time David was up, the Lord sent his prophet Gad, David's seer, to say unto him, 'Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee (or bring it upon thee; that is, either three years famine (so we read in 1 Chron. xxi. 12. though in 2 Sam. xxiv. 13. it is seven years; which some think to be three years more added to the three years famine last past, which, with the fourth year then running, would make seven; which yet would be but three years of new punishment;) or three months to be destroyed before thy foes, while the sword of thine enemies overtaketh thee: or else three days the sword of the Lord, even the pestilence in the land; and the angel of the Lord destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. Now, therefore, said the prophet, advise and consider well what answer I shall return to him that sent me.'

Here the gradation is by years, months, and days. Three years famine. Three months for the sword to devour. Three days for the pestilence to rage. Which shews, that three days of pestilence is equivalent to three months of havock by the sword; and three months of war, or destruction by the sword, equal to three years famine.

Though to choose was a favour, yet the choice was hard: which made David say to the prophet, 'I am in a great strait.'

‘strait.’ Yet having duly weighed all, he concluded, ‘Let us fall into the hand of the Lord (for his mercies are great and many :) but let us not fall into the hand of man.’ By which he chose the pestilence; which is here called the Sword of the Lord; and wherein the hand of God is more immediately seen, than in war or famine; wherein man may have a hand, especially in war.

The choice thus made, the Lord accordingly sent a pestilence upon Israel, which lasted three days; and within that time there died of the people seventy thousand men.

Thus God suited the punishment to the sin (though not to the person sinning;) lessening the number of them in whose number he would have gloried; yet transferring the immediate punishment from the king to the people. Which may stand for another instance, that the subjects sometimes smart for the sins which their rulers, in their ruling capacity, commit.

By this time the destroying angel, having scattered the plague throughout the land, was come to Jerusalem, and had stretched forth his devouring sword over the city; which David, and the elders of Israel who were with him, clothed in sackcloth, perceiving, they fell upon their faces; and David, humbly addressing himself unto God, said, ‘Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? Even I it is that have sinned, and done evil indeed. But as for these sheep, what have they done? Let thy hand, I pray thee, O Lord my God! be on me, and on my father’s house, but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.’

Now did the Lord repent him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, ‘It is enough: stay now thine hand.’ The angel, when he received this countermand, stood between the earth and the heaven, by the threshing-floor of Araunah (called also Ornan, the Jebusite, who, with his four sons, was threshing wheat, and seeing the angel, hid themselves.) And forthwith the angel dispatched the seer Gad to David, bidding him say unto him, ‘Go up, and set up an altar to the Lord, in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.’

David made no delay. And as he was going, Araunah, seeing the king and his servants coming on towards him, went out to meet them; and bowing himself before the king, with his face towards the ground, asked, ‘Wherefore is my lord

‘ lord the king come to his servant ?’ ‘ To buy the threshing-floor of thee, answered David, to build an altar therein to the Lord, that the plague may be stayed from the people.’ ‘ Take it to thee, said Araunah, and let my lord the king do as he pleases with it : lo, I give thee, added he, the oxen also for burnt-offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat-offering ; I give it all.’ ‘ Nay, replied David, but I will verily buy it for the full price : for I will not take that which is thine for the Lord ; nor offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which cost me nothing.’ Then coming to a price, David gave Araunah for the threshing-floor and the oxen fifty shekels of silver. So we read it in Samuel ; which, if shekels of the sanctuary, makes six pounds and five shillings : if common shekels, but half that money. But in Chronicles, it is six hundred shekels of gold by weight ; which, valuing each shekel at fifteen shillings, comes to four hundred and fifty pounds. The difference is great. But to help it, some think the fifty shekels of silver, in Samuel, were for the oxen only, the price of the land being there omitted : and the six hundred shekels of gold, in Chronicles, for land and oxen altogether. But the price seems extreme on the one hand or the other.

If any, unacquainted with the husbandry of those times, should inquire what relation the oxen had to the threshing-floor, that they were at it, and were sold with it, it may not be amiss, for the information of such, to observe here, that the ancients used oxen for the treading or threshing out their grain ; and sometimes with the oxen drew a wheel over the corn upon the floor, whereby the grain was beaten out. The use of the oxen in this work appears in the Mosaick law, which commanded, that they should not muzzle the ox when he trod (or, as in the margin, threshed) out the corn, Deut. xxv. 4. which the apostle repeats to another purpose, 1 Cor. ix. 9. And that they used to get out their corn by turning a wheel about upon it, the prophet Isaiah teaches, Isa. xxviii. 27. where he says, ‘ The vetches are not threshed with a threshing instrument : neither is the cart wheel-turned about upon the cummin ;’ implying that the cart-wheel was turned about upon the grain. Which custom is thought by some to be alluded to in Prov. xx. 26. where the wise king is said to scatter the wicked by bringing the wheel over them. The threshing instruments also, mentioned here by Araunah, comprehending

comprehending the yokes of the oxen, and the wheels, with such other implements as were necessary to fasten the oxen to the wheels, would afford much more wood for the burnt-offerings than many flails could do. But to proceed :

The place thus purchased, David built an altar there, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and called upon the Lord. And the Lord answered him from heaven, by fire upon the altar of burnt-offering; and so was the Lord appeased for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

The End of the Second Book of SAMUEL.

THE

THE
FIRST BOOK

OF THE

KINGS;

INCLUDING THE FIRST TWENTY CHAPTERS OF THE
SECOND BOOK OF THE

CHRONICLES;

And containing an History of 118 Years, from the Beginning of the Reign of King Solomon, over both Israel and Judah, to the End of the Reigns of Ahab King of Israel, and of Jehoshaphat King of Judah.

KING David was now grown old; so that, although they covered him with clothes, yet he wanted heat*. Wherefore some of his servants proposed that a young virgin should be provided to wait on the king, that she might cherish him and keep him warm. This being approved of, they sought through all the coasts of Israel, and at length pitched upon a fair damsel, whose name was Abishag, called a Shunamite, from the place where she lived which was Shunem, a town in the tribe of Issachar, Josh. xix. 18. and having brought her to the king, she ministered to him, and cherished him.

The king's eldest son now living was Adonijah, a very goodly man, and one whom the king his father had been so

* 1 Kings i. A. M. 2989.

indulgent

indulgent to, that he had not displeased him at any time, so much as by saying in any case, why hast thou done so? He, an ambitious prince, considering now his father's age and weakness, and thinking he lived too long to keep him from the throne, exalted himself, and said, 'I will be king.' And having (as his brother Absalom had done) prepared himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him, he conferred with Joab his father's general, and with Abiathar the priest, who joining with him, and encouraging him, he made a great feast, to which he invited all his brethren, the king's sons (except Solomon); and the men of Judah, the king's servants (except Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, captain of the king's guards, and the mighty men, whom he did not call to his feast). The design was, that when they had feasted well, and made the people merry, they should proclaim Adonijah king.

Of this conspiracy the prophet Nathan having got knowledge, hastened to queen Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, and said to her, 'Hast thou not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith doth reign, and David our lord knows nothing of it? Now therefore come, I pray thee, said he, and let me give thee counsel; that thou mayest save thine own life, and the life of thy son Solomon.'

She listening to him, 'Go get thee, said he, unto king David, and say unto him, Didst not thou, my lord, O king, swear unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly, Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? Why then doth Adonijah reign? And, added he, while thou art yet talking with the king, I also will come in after thee, and confirm thy words.'

Bathsheba, thus instructed, went into the king's chamber, and bowing did obeisance to the king, who asked her, 'What she would have.' Whereupon she said, 'My lord, thou swearest by the Lord thy God unto thine handmaid, that Solomon thy son should assuredly reign after me, and sit upon my throne. And yet now Adonijah reigneth; and thou, my lord the king, knowest it not. And he hath slain oxen, and fat cattle, and sheep in abundance; and hath invited all the rest of the king's sons, with Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the host: but Solomon thy servant hath he not called. And thou, my lord, O king! the eyes of all Israel are upon thee, expecting thou shouldest tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king'

king after him: otherwise it may come to pass, that when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, I and my son Solomon shall be accounted offenders.'

While she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet came in also (upon which, it seems, Bathsheba withdrew; for when they had spoken she was called in again, 1 Kings i. 28.) And when they had told the king that the prophet was there, he was brought before him; having bowed himself with his face towards the ground, he said, 'My lord, O king! hast thou said Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? For he is gone down this day, and hath slain oxen, and fat cattle, and sheep in abundance; and hath called all the king's sons, and the captains of the host, and Abiathar the priest; and behold they eat and drink before him, and say, God save king Adonijah! But me, even me thy servant, (said he, not sticking to put himself and others also before the prince) and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and thy servant Solomon, hath he not called. Is this thing done by my lord the king, and thou hast not shewed unto thy servant who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?'

Upon this king David said, 'Call me Bathsheba;' who coming in, and standing before the king, he swore and said unto her, 'As the Lord liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all distress, even as I swore unto thee formerly, by the Lord God of Israel, saying, Assuredly, Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead, even so will I certainly do this day.'

At that word Bathsheba, bowing with her face toward the earth, did reverence to the king, and said, 'Let my lord king David live for ever.'

Then said the king, 'Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada.' (For Nathan, it seems, withdrew when Bathsheba came in the second time, as she had done before when he came in the first time) These coming all three before the king, he said to them, 'Take with you my servants, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon (a brook that ran between the city of David and the other part of Jerusalem); and let Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon! Then shall ye come up after him, that he may come

‘ come and sit upon my throne : for he shall be king in my
‘ stead ; and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and
‘ over Judah.’ ‘ Amen, said Benaiah, and the Lord God
‘ of my lord the king say so too. And, added he, as the
‘ Lord hath been with my lord the king, even so be he with
‘ Solomon ; and make his throne greater than the throne of
‘ my lord king David.’

Down forthwith went Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and captain Benaiah, with the king’s guards, the Cherethites and Pelethites ; and causing Solomon to ride upon the king his father’s mule, brought him to Gihon, where Zadok the priest, having taken with him an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, anointed Solomon ; which done, they blew the trumpet, and all the people cried out, ‘ God
‘ save king Solomon ! Then came the people up after him,
‘ piping with pipes, and rejoicing with great joy, so that the
‘ earth rang with the sound of them.’

By this time Adonijah and his guests, who were at Engrogel on the other side of the brook Gihon, had just finished their feast. And his party being ready to proclaim him king, they were surprised and startled with the sound of the trumpet, and the shouts of the people that attended on Solomon. And while Joab was musing what that noise meant, as if the city was in an uproar, in stepped Jonathan, the son of Abiathar the priest, amongst them ; whom when Adonijah saw, he said, ‘ Come in, for thou art a valiant man, and bringest good
‘ tidings.’

But when Adonijah had heard the tidings which Jonathan now brought, he did not think them good. For Jonathan told him, ‘ Verily our lord king David hath made Solomon
‘ king. For the king hath sent with him Zadok the priest,
‘ and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada,
‘ with the Cherethites and the Pelethites his guards, and they
‘ have caused him to ride upon the king’s mule ; and Zadok
‘ the priest, and Nathan the prophet, have anointed him
‘ king in Gihon, and they are come up from thence rejoic-
‘ ing, so that the city rang again ; and this is the noise which
‘ ye have heard. And now, added he, Solomon sits on the
‘ throne of the kingdom ; and the king’s servants coming to
‘ bless our lord the king, said, God make the name of Solo-
‘ mon better than thy name, and his throne greater than thy
‘ throne. Whereupon the king, bowing himself in reverence
‘ to God as he lay upon his bed, said, Blessed be the Lord.

‘ God of Israel, who hath given me a successor to sit on my throne this day, even while I myself am alive to see it.’

At this relation all the guests that were with Adonijah were so terrified, that they rose up in a fright, and fled every man to shift for himself.

As for Adonijah himself, he ran for fear of Solomon, and caught hold of the horns of the altar, as a place of refuge for offenders, till he could have assurance from Solomon, that he would not put him to death. Which when Solomon heard of, he said, ‘ If he will shew himself a worthy man, there shall not an hair of his head fall to the earth (he shall suffer nothing) : but if hereafter wickedness shall be found in him (if he shall again attempt any thing against me) he shall die.’ So king Solomon sending this kind message to him, they brought Adonijah from the altar to the king : and he bowing himself to king Solomon, in token both of thankfulness and subjection, and to acknowledge his sovereignty over him, was dismissed by the king to go to his house without restraint.

After this, David finding his natural strength more and more to decay, assembled all the princes of Israel, the chief of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that attended the king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and over the hundreds, and the stewards that were over all the substance and possession of the king and his sons, with the officers, and all the mighty and valiant men, unto Jerusalem ; where being all met together attending the king’s pleasure, king David, though weak, stood up upon his feet, and thus kindly bespake them *.

‘ Hear me, my brethren and my people. I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and I had made ready for the building : but God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name. Howbeit, the Lord God of Israel chose me, before all the house of my father, to be king over Israel. For he hath chosen Judah to be the ruler ; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father ; and among the sons of my father, he liked me, to make me king over all Israel. And of all my sons (for the Lord hath given me many sons) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over

* 1 Chron. xxviii.

‘ Israel.

‘ Israel. And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall
 ‘ build my house and my courts : for I have chosen him to
 ‘ be my son, and I will be his father. Moreover, I will
 ‘ establish his kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do my
 ‘ commandments and my judgments, as at this day. Now,
 ‘ therefore, said David to them that were present, in the
 ‘ sight of all Israel, the congregation of the Lord, and in the
 ‘ audience of our God, seek for and keep all the command-
 ‘ ments of the Lord your God, that ye may possess this good
 ‘ land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children after
 ‘ you for ever.’

Then turning his speech to his son. ‘ And thou, Solomon
 ‘ my son, said he, know thou the God of thy father, and
 ‘ serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind ;
 ‘ for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the
 ‘ imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will
 ‘ be found of thee : but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee
 ‘ off for ever. Take heed now, therefore, for the Lord hath
 ‘ chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary : be strong
 ‘ and do it.’

David then gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the
 porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries there-
 of, and of the upper-chambers thereof, and of the inner-par-
 lours thereof, and of the place of the mercy-seat, even the
 pattern of all that he had by the spirit, viz. of the courts of
 the house of the Lord, and of all the chambers round about ;
 of the treasuries of the house of the Lord, and of the trea-
 suries of the dedicated things : also for the courses of the
 priests, and of the Levites, and for all the work of the service
 of the house of the Lord ; and for all the vessels of service in
 the house of the Lord.

Then he delivered unto him by weight the gold and the
 silver which he had long been gathering together, and had
 laid up for this service ; with particular direction how, and
 in what proportion, to apply it to the several uses and parts
 of the work, according to the understanding God had given
 him of the pattern of the house, and of the vessels and uten-
 sils thereof.

And then again exhorting him to be strong, and of good
 courage to do it, he bid him ‘ Not fear, nor be dismayed ;
 ‘ for the Lord God, said he, even my God, will be with
 ‘ thee, and he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou

‘ hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.’

And further to encourage him, he told him, ‘ The courses of the priests and Levites should be with him for all the service of the house of God ; and he should have with him every willing skilful man for all manner of workmanship and service ; and that the princes and all the people would be at his command *.’

Which that they might the more readily be, he applied himself again to them, and to the whole congregation, wishing them to consider, ‘ That Solomon his son, whom alone the Lord had chosen to that work, was yet but young and tender, and the work was great : for the palace which he was to build was not for man, but for the Lord God.’

Then recounting to them how he had, at the publick charge, with all his might prepared materials for the house of his God ; as gold, silver, brass, iron, wood, precious stones of divers sorts and colours, and marble in abundance, for their several and proper services (of which he had given his son Solomon a particular account) : and that, out of his high affection to the house of his God, he had (over and above all those) given of his own proper goods three thousand talents of the gold of Ophir (which accounting each talent at four thousand and five hundred pounds, amounts, if I miscast them not, to thirteen millions and five hundred thousand pounds) and seven thousand talents of refined silver (which, reckoning each talent at three hundred seventy five pounds, makes two millions six hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds). He invited the congregation to a voluntary contribution, by saying, ‘ And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord ?’

Upon this invitation, the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers over the king’s work, offered willingly ; and gave for the service of the house of God, of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand drachms (the five thousand talents coming to two and twenty millions and five hundred thousand pounds ; and the ten thousand drachms, at fifteen shillings apiece, coming to seven thousand and five hundred pounds : in all two and twenty millions five hundred

* 1 Chron. xxix.

and seven thousand and five hundred pounds in gold). And of silver they gave ten thousand talents (making, at three hundred seventy-five pounds each, three millions seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds in silver). Besides eighteen thousand talents of brass, and an hundred thousand talents of iron (which probably went by weight, whatever the gold and silver did). As many also as had precious stones, gave them to the treasure of the house of the Lord. And when the offerings were made, the people rejoiced, because they had offered willingly, and with a perfect heart. And king David also rejoicing with great joy, brake forth into this song of praises and prayer unto the Lord before all the congregation.

‘Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, our Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord! is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord! and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; for in thy hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.

‘But who am I? and what is my people, that we should be enabled to offer so willingly after this manner? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as all our fathers were: our days on the earth are (short and transient) as a shadow: and there is no (certainty of) abiding. O Lord our God! all this store, which we have prepared to build thee an house for thy holy name, cometh from thine hand, and is all thine own. I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart, I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers. keep thy people ever in this mind, and establish their heart unto thee! and give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, that he may keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and do thy will in building the palace for which I have made provision.’

Having thus poured forth his soul in praises and prayer to God, king David said to all the congregation, ‘Now bless the

‘ the Lord your God.’ Whereupon all the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowing their heads, worshipped the Lord, and did reverence to the king. And on the next day they offered sacrifices and burnt-offerings unto the Lord, even a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, with their drink-offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel; and did eat and drink before the Lord on that day with great gladness.

And in the midst of this festivity they proclaimed Solomon king the second time, anointing him unto the Lord to be the chief governor; and Zadok to be the chief priest. Then sat Solomon on the throne of the Lord, as king, instead of David his father (or rather as *co-rer* with his father, during the little remainder of his father’s life: for it does not appear that David resigned his sceptre until he resigned his last breath.) And Solomon reigned prosperously, all Israel obeying; and all the princes and the mighty men, yea, and all the sons also of king David, submitting themselves unto Solomon as their king.

Now when king David felt death more nearly approaching, he called his son Solomon to him, and giving him his last charge,* said, ‘ I go the way of all the earth (which is a periphrasis of dying): be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man. And keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, his commandments, his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses; that thou mayst prosper in all that thou dost, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself; that the Lord may continue his word which he spake concerning me’ when he said, ‘ If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth, with all their heart, and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee a man on the throne of Israel.’

Then coming to speak of particular persons and things relating to his government, ‘ Thou knowest,’ said he, ‘ what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me (referring probably to his killing Absalom contrary to his express command, and his speaking so boldly to him afterwards); and what he did to the two captains of the hosts (of Israel and of Judah) Abner and Amasa, both whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, putting the blood of war upon his belt and in his shoes (that is, doing it as openly and daringly

* 1 Kings ii.

‘ as if it had been done in war). Do thou therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoary head go down to the grave in peace. But shew kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for they furnished my table when I fled because of Absalom thy brother.

‘ And behold, said he further, thou hast with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, who cursed me with a grievous curse when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan (in my return) and I swore to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword. Now, therefore, hold him not guiltless; for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do to him: but his hoary head bring thou down to the grave with blood.’

If any think this direction of David’s to his son Solomon, concerning Shimei, was too severe, inasmuch as he had before, upon his submission, granted him his life; such may do well to consider, that Shimei’s offence was two-fold; against God, as well as against David. God’s law was express, Exod. xxii. 28. ‘Thou shalt not curse the ruler of thy people.’ Now David was not only the ruler of the people, but God’s anointed; a king of his own immediate choice; whom he had raised up to fight his battles, and to execute his judgment upon Saul and his house, for his disobedience and rebellion. And therefore Shimei, in railing at and cursing David, calling him a bloody man, and that with particular respect to the blood of Saul’s house, did blaspheme God, who had taken the kingdom from Saul, and given it to David. And although God was pleased to give David leave to shew his own condescension and clemency, in forgiving Shimei’s personal offence against him; yet he would not so pass by the sin against himself: and therefore he both stirred up David to commit the punishment to his son and successor Solomon, and gave Solomon wisdom so to adjust the punishment, that Shimei might yet have escaped the severest part of it, if he had not brought it upon himself by a new transgression, in breaking his oath afterwards, as we shall see hereafter.

When David had ended his advice to his son, he put up a prayer to God for him, and brake forth withal into a kind of prophetick declaration of the flourishing greatness, prosperity, peace, and justice of Solomon’s reign; which in some respects was typical of the reign and kingdom of Christ. This takes up the place of the seventy-second psalm, and the last words

words thereof speak this to be the last prayer or psalm that David made. And being now ready to yield up the ghost, he breathed out his last words to this effect:

‘ David the son of Jesse saith, even the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist (or singer) of Israel saith, The Spirit of the Lord spake by (or in) me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, The rock of Israel spake thus to me, He that ruleth over men should be just, ruling in the fear of God. And such a one will be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth; even as a morning without clouds: as the tender grafs springing out of the earth, by the clear shining (of the sun) after rain. And although my house be not so with God (not as a morning without clouds, but has had both clouds and storms); yet he hath made me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for in this is all my safety, and this is the sum of my desire, although he make it not to grow. But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away (because they cannot be taken hold of with hands: but the man that shall touch them had need be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear) and they shall be utterly burnt with fire in the same place.’

Thus this great king, having reigned over Israel forty years, seven in Hebron, and three and thirty in Jerusalem; and having lived to a good old age of seventy years, being full of days, riches, and honour, slept with his fathers, and was buried in his own city, the city of David*, 1 Chron. xxix. 26, 27, 28.

Although Solomon, who succeeded his father David in the kingdom, was but a young man when he came to the crown; yet that he was married some time before, appears by the age of his son Rehoboam: for Rehoboam was in his forty-first year, 2 Chron. xii. 13. when he began to reign; which was immediately after his father’s death, who reigned but forty years, 1 Kings xi. 42. so that Solomon had a son when he began to reign.

As soon almost as he was settled on his throne, an occasion was unhappily offered him to stain his sword with his brother Adonijah’s blood; which thus happened:

Adonijah, as was observed before, being the eldest son to king David then living, had aspired to the crown in his

* A. M. 2989.

father's life-time (which hastened Solomon's accession to the throne;) but, upon his submission, was pardoned by Solomon. He now, whether with a design to stir up new troubles, as was suspected, or only taken with the beauty of the person, hast cast an amorous eye upon the fair Shunamitish dame, young Abishag, who had been a concubinary wife to his father David for some little time before his death. And because Adonijah knew he might not enjoy her without the king's consent, and had not himself such an interest in the king, as from thence to promise himself success, he applied himself to the king's mother, the queen dowager Bathsheba, hoping by her mediation to prevail.

When first he addressed himself to Bathsheba, she remembering how he had acted before, and looking upon him as an enemy to her family, was somewhat doubtful of his intention; and therefore asked him if he came peaceably; which he assuring her he did, and withal telling her that he had something to say to her; she bid him, say on. Whereupon he thus bespake her:

'Thou knowest, said he, that the kingdom (in the right line of inheritance) was mine; and all Israel (so he pleased himself with thinking) set their faces on me, expecting that I should reign. Howbeit the kingdom is turned about, and is become my brother's: for the Lord hath given it him. And now I ask one petition of thee: deny me not.' She bidding him say on; he said, 'Speak, I pray thee, unto Solomon the king (for he will not say thee nay) that he give me Abishag the Shunamite to wife.' 'That I will,' replied she; and away she went to the king about it.

When the king saw her coming, he rose up to meet her, and bowing himself unto her, sat down on his throne: and causing a seat to be set for her, she sat on his right-hand. Then telling him she had a small petition to ask of him, which she desired him not to deny, he bid her ask on; and somewhat too hastily promised her that he would not say her nay. Whereupon she said, 'Let Abishag the Shunamite be given to thy brother Adonijah to wife.'

King Solomon, startled at such an unexpected request, answered, 'And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunamite only for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also (for he is mine elder brother); even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah.' For Solomon concluded they were all three combined again,

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in a new conspiracy against him. Wherefore, as before he over-hastily promised his mother that he would not deny her request, so he now too readily swore by the Lord, 'That Adonijah had spoken this word against his own life, and should die for it out of hand.' And without more ado, such is the mischief of arbitrary government, sending Benaiah, the captain of his guards, he fell upon him and killed him.

Then sending for Abiathar the priest, he said to him 'Thou art worthy of death. Yet I will not at this time put thee to death, because thou hast borne the ark of the Lord God before David my father, and because thou hast had thy share in all the afflictions that have attended my father. Get thee therefore to Anathoth, to thy own possessions; and there lead a private life.' So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the Lord; and therein fulfilled the word of the Lord, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh; and put Zadok in his room.

When Joab heard how Solomon had dealt with Adonijah and Abiathar, he thought if there was any safety for him, it must be in the tabernacle of the Lord. Thither therefore he betook himself, and caught hold on the horns of the altar; hoping for protection from the holiness of the place. But he miscounted: for besides his treason in siding with Adonijah, Joab was doubly guilty of wilful murder, in the premeditated assassinations of Abner and Amasa; for which it was lawful to take the murderer from God's altar, and slay him, *Exod. xxi. 14.* Solomon therefore, hearing that Joab was fled to the altar for refuge, bid Benaiah go draw him from thence, and fall upon him. Away went Benaiah, and told him, 'The king's command was that he should come forth'. Joab, expecting nothing but death, resolutely answered, 'Nay: but (if I must die) I will die here.'

Benaiah, unwilling to shed blood in the tabernacle, reported Joab's answer to the king; who thereupon bid him, 'Go, do as he hath said: fall on him there, and then bury him; that, said he, thou mayst take away the innocent blood which Joab shed, from me and from the house of my father: and the Lord shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men more righteous and better than himself (to wit, Abner, captain of the host of Israel; and Amasa, captain of the host of Judah) and slew them treacherously, without my father's knowledge.' Benaiah then going down again, fell upon Joab and slew him; and he

he was buried in his own house in the wilderness : and the king made Benaiah general in his room.

Shimei's turn came next ; whom the king sending for, bid him build him an house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and not go forth from thence any whither, on pain of death. Shimei, fearing worse, was glad he came off so ; and therefore approving the sentence of his confinement to the city, he answered, ' The saying is good : as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do ; ' and he bound himself to it with a solemn oath.

Three years he lived thus, strictly observing the bounds of his confinement. But at the three years end, it so fell out, that two of his servants ran away from him, and went to Achish, king of Gath : which when Shimei understood, forgetting himself, he saddled his ass, and went forth to Gath to seek his servants ; and having found them, he brought them back with him to Jerusalem.

There wanted not some informer or other to give king Solomon an account of this little excursion that Shimei had made : whereupon the king sent for Shimei, and taxing him with disobedience and breach of oath, said unto him, ' Did I not make thee to swear by the Lord, and did not I protest also to thee, saying, Know for a certain, that on the day thou goest out, and walkest abroad any whither, thou shalt surely die ? And thou consentedst thereunto, saying, The word that I have heard is good. Why then hast thou not kept the oath of the Lord, and the commandment that I have charged thee with ? '

Then reminding him of his former offence (for which this confinement had been his punishment) he said to Shimei, * ' Thou knowest all the wickedness which thine heart is privy to, that thou didst to David my father. Therefore the Lord shall return thy wickedness upon thine own head ; and king Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the Lord for ever. ' Then giving the word to Benaiah, he following Shimei out, fell upon him that he died : and the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.

Solomon now looking upon himself as more safe, by the removal of these factious men (who were most likely to have headed a party against him) and finding that the Lord was

with him, and had strengthened him in his kingdom, * he assembled all his chief officers, his captains of thousands and of hundreds, his judges and governors in all Israel, with the chief of the fathers: and he, with all the congregation, went to the high-place that was at Gibeon. For though David had brought up the ark of God from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem, where he had pitched a tent for it; yet the tabernacle of the congregation of God, which Moses the servant of the Lord had made in the wilderness, and the brazen altar that Bezaleel made, remained still at Gibeon.

Thither went Solomon and the whole congregation, and offered a thousand burnt-offerings upon the brazen altar before the Lord, who appeared to Solomon in a dream that night, and bid him ask what he should give him. Whereupon Solomon thus spake unto the Lord:

‘Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father
 * great bounty, according as he walked before thee in truth
 * and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with
 * thee: and thou hast kept for him this great kindness,
 * that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as at
 * this day. And now, O Lord my God! seeing thou hast
 * made thy servant king, instead of David my father, over
 * thy chosen people, a great people that cannot be num-
 * bered for multitude; and that I, who am but as a little
 * child, know not how to behave myself in the discharge
 * of so great an office: give, therefore, unto thy servant an
 * understanding heart, furnished with wisdom and knowledge,
 * to judge thy people, that I may discern between good
 * and bad; for (without thy wisdom) who is able to judge
 * this thy so great a people?’ †

So well did this request of Solomon’s please the Lord, that he thereupon said unto him, ‘Because thou hast asked
 * this thing, and hast not asked long life, riches, or honour,
 * for thyself, nor the life of thine enemies; but hast asked
 * for thyself understanding, wisdom, and knowledge to dis-
 * cern judgment, that thou mayst judge my people over whom
 * I have made thee king; behold I have done according to
 * thy words, and wisdom and knowledge is granted unto
 * thee. For I have given thee a wise and understanding
 * heart, so that (for wisdom) there was none like thee be-
 * fore thee; neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

* 2 Chron. i.

† 1 Kings iii. 2 Chron. i.

‘ And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, to wit, both riches and honour; such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee; neither shall there any after thee have the like. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and commandments, as thy father David did walk, then will I lengthen thy days also.’

Solomon, waking from his sleep, was sensible that he had had a dream. And coming back to Jerusalem (after he had presented himself before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and had offered peace-offerings, and made a feast to all his servants) it was not long before occasion was given him to exercise that wisdom, which in his dream he had asked, and the Lord had promised to give him. For a controversy having arisen between two women (who are called harlots, as Rahab is called, Josh. ii. 1. but may rather perhaps be supposed to be victuallers) they came unto the king for judgment: and she that was the plaintiff thus opened the cause before him:

‘ O my Lord! said she, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I was delivered of a child with her in the house. And it came to pass, that the third day after I was delivered, she also was delivered: but her child died in the night, because she overlaid it. Then, there being no stranger in the house with us, but only we two alone together, she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me while I slept, and laying it in her bosom, laid her dead child in my bosom. And when I arose in the morning to give my child suck, behold it was dead: but when I had well viewed and considered it in the morning, I found it was not my child which I did bear.’

She having thus stated her case, the other woman (who was the defendant) denying the charge, said, ‘ Nay: but the living is my son, and the dead is thy son.’ The complainant, on the other hand, rejoined, ‘ No: but the dead is thy son, and the living is my son.’

Thus they bandied the cause to and fro; which the king observing, and that there was no witness in the case, he called for a sword; and when it was brought, he bid the officer divide the live child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other; which when the plaintiff-woman heard (whose indeed the living child was) her bowels yearning towards her son, she cried out to the king, ‘ O my lord give her the living child, and in no-wise slay it.’ But

the other woman (who being no kin to it, had not any natural affection to it, but claimed it only to hide her own shame, or avoid punishment; for having overlaid her own child, and stolen her neighbour's said, 'Let it be neither mine, nor thine; but divide it.' By which the king having discovered which was the true mother, adjudged the living child to her. And when this came to be known abroad among the people, it made them reverence the king, and stand in awe of him: for they saw by this, that the wisdom of God was in him to do judgment.

As Solomon had married an Ammonitish woman before he was king, who we may suppose was a proselyte to the Jewish religion, else his godly father David would not have allowed it; so now, having made affinity with Pharaoh the king of Egypt, he took his daughter to wife, who it is likely was a proselyte also, because it is said of him presently after, 'That Solomon loved the Lord, and walked in the statutes of David his father.' And because he had not yet built himself a palace, he brought this his new queen into the city of David, until he had made an end of building not only his own house, but the house of the Lord, and the wall of Jerusalem round about. But afterwards he made an house for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had taken to wife.

And now remembering the charge which his father king David had given him; and, pursuant thereto, determining to build an house for the name of the Lord, he sent unto Hiram king of Tyre* (who was ever a lover of David, and who, upon hearing that Solomon was anointed king in the room of his father, sent his servants to congratulate his accession to the crown). First, therefore, desiring that the amity and intercourse that had been between the two crowns might be continued, he wrote to Hiram after this manner:

'Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house unto the name of the Lord his God, for the wars which were about him on every side, until the Lord put his enemies under the soles of his feet. But now the Lord my God hath given me rest on every side; so that there is neither adversary, nor any thing else, to hinder. Wherefore I propose to build an house unto the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he

* 1 Kings v.

2 Chron. ii.

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‘ shall build an house unto my name. Now, therefore, give
 ‘ thou command unto thy workmen, that they hew me cedar
 ‘ trees out of Lebanon: for thou knowest that there is not
 ‘ any among us that have skill to hew timber like unto the
 ‘ Sidonians. Yet my servants shall be with thy servants in
 ‘ the work; and I will give thee hire for thy servants as thou
 ‘ shalt set the price. Or I will give to thy servants, the
 ‘ hewers that shall cut the timber, twenty thousand mea-
 ‘ sures of beaten wheat, and twenty thousand measures
 ‘ of barley, and twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty
 ‘ thousand baths of oil (a bath containing four gallons and a
 ‘ half).’ He desired him also to send him a man that was
 skilful to work in gold, silver, brass, and iron; and for em-
 broidering and graving, who might join with the artists which
 he had already of his father David’s providing, and might
 work with them.

When king Hiram (who is called also Hiram, 2 Chron.
 ii. 3.) had received this message from king Solomon, he
 blessed the Lord, for having given to David a wise son to
 rule over so great a people, which he took, and rightly, to
 be a token of God’s love to his people. Then returning
 answer to king Solomon in writing, he expressed himself to
 this effect:

‘ I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for,
 ‘ and will answer thy desire concerning timber, both of cedar
 ‘ and of fir. My servants shall bring them down from Le-
 ‘ banon to the sea; and I will convey them by sea in floats
 ‘ to Joppa, and discharge them there. And now I have sent
 ‘ thee a skilful artist (that belonged to my father Hiram)
 ‘ whose mother was of the tribe of Dan; but his father was
 ‘ a Tyrian. He is endued with understanding to work in
 ‘ gold, silver, brass, iron, stone, and timber, and in purple,
 ‘ blue, crimson, and fine linen; to grave also any manner of
 ‘ graving; and to find out every device which shall be put
 ‘ to him. And as for the wheat, the barley, the oil, and
 ‘ the wine, which my lord hath spoken of, let him send them
 ‘ unto his servants.’

Having received this answer from Hiram, king Solomon
 caused the workmen that were strangers to be numbered; and
 finding them to be an hundred fifty and three thousand and
 six hundred men, he appointed seventy thousand of them to
 be bearers of burdens, and eighty thousand to be hewers in
 the mountain of Lebanon; and the other three thousand and

six hundred he set over the rest, as overseers of the work. Thirty thousand also he raised of his own people, whom he sent to Lebanon, to work with king Hiram's men. But these being divided into three companies, went by their courses, ten thousand at a time; where having served their month, they returned, and another ten thousand succeeded them: so that every one of these was one month abroad in the service, and two months at home. And of these Adoniram (which signifies the high lord) had the oversight.

All things being thus in readiness, on the second day of the second month (by the Jews called Ziff) in the fourth year of his reign * (which was exactly four hundred and eighty years from the coming up of the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt) king Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared unto David, and in the very place which David had prepared, in the threshing-floor of Araunah (or Ornan) the Jebusite (and where Abraham, long before, had been directed by God to offer up his son Isaac, Gen. xxii. 2.); laying the foundations thereof of hewn stones, great and costly. The dimensions and description whereof, with the ornaments and richness thereof, the reader may see at large in 1 Kings vi. &c. and 2 Chron. iii. &c. And in his eleventh year, in the month by the Hebrews called Bull, which is the eighth month, was the house finished throughout all the parts of it. So that it was seven years and six months in building. And such care was taken for the squaring and fitting of the materials before they were brought thither, that there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron, heard in the house while it was in building.

For Solomon's encouragement while he was building it, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'Concerning this house which thou art building: if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father; and I will dwell among my people, the children of Israel, and will not forsake them.'

When king Solomon had fully finished the house of the Lord †, and had placed all the vessels for service and ornament in it, he assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, and the chief of the fathers of the children of

* 1 Kings v. 2 Chron. ii. A. M. 2993. † A. M. 3001.

Israel in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which was Zion. Which was the more readily done, because it was the time for the feast of tabernacles; which by divine appointment (Levit. xxiii.) was held, with other solemn feasts, in the seventh month, by them called Ethanim: at which time all their males were obliged to appear before the Lord in the place which he should choose (Deut. xvi. 16.) which was this new built temple.

Being therefore thus assembled, the priests and Levites (whose charge it was) took up the ark, with the tabernacle, and all the holy vessels that were in it *; and having brought them up, and placed them in their respective places appointed for them in the temple, when the priests (who now attended in a body) were come out of the holy place, and they (with the Levites and other officers of the temple) sang, accompanied with their trumpets and other instruments of musick, the cxxxvith psalm, the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord. Which Solomon observing, took occasion from thence to infer, that the Lord had taken (as it were) possession of the place; urging what the Lord had formerly said, 'That he would dwell in the thick darkness.' Which expression, because we no-where read it in those terms, is supposed to be taken from Levit. xvi. 2. where the Lord said, 'I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat.' 'But I, said Solomon, have built thee an house to dwell in: a settled place for thee to abide in for ever.'

Then turning his face about, he blessed all the congregation of Israel, and said, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath with his hands fulfilled that which he spake with his mouth to my father David, when he said, Since the day that I brought forth my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel wherein to build an house, that my name might be therein; but I have chosen Jerusalem that my name might be there; and I have chosen David to be over my people Israel. And whereas, added Solomon, it was in the heart of my father David, to build an house for the name of the Lord God of Israel, the Lord; accepting the good-will of my father, said to him, Thou didst well, in that it was in thy heart, notwithstanding thou

* 1 Kings viii. 2 Chron. v.

‘ shalt not build the house: but thy son, which shall come
 ‘ forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house for my name.
 ‘ The Lord therefore hath performed his word that he hath
 ‘ spoken: for I am risen up in the room of David my father,
 ‘ and am set on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised;
 ‘ and have built the house for the name of the Lord God of
 ‘ Israel: and in it have I put the ark, wherein is the cove-
 ‘ nant of the Lord that he made with the children of Israel.’

Having thus made a thankful acknowledgment of the
 faithfulness and gracious goodness of the Lord, both unto him
 and to his people, he kneeled down before all the congrega-
 tion of Israel, upon the brazen scaffold of five cubits square
 and three cubits high (which he had made and set in the
 midst of the court before the altar of the Lord) and spreading
 forth his hands towards heaven, he thus addressed himself
 unto the Lord:

‘ O Lord God of Israel! there is no God like thee in the
 ‘ heaven, nor in the earth, who keepest covenant, and shewest
 ‘ mercy unto thy servants, that walk before thee with all
 ‘ their hearts. Thou who hast kept with thy servant David,
 ‘ my father, that which thou promisedst him, and hast ac-
 ‘ tually fulfilled what thou spakest to him (with respect to my
 ‘ building this house to thee) as it is this day: keep now, O
 ‘ Lord! with thy servant my father that also which thou
 ‘ didst promise him, when thou saidst, ‘There shall not fail
 ‘ thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel, pro-
 ‘ vided thy children take heed to their way, to walk before
 ‘ me in my law, as thou hast walked before me. Now then,
 ‘ O Lord God of Israel! let thy word be verified which thou
 ‘ hast spoken unto thy servant David.

‘ But (correcting himself, with respect to his desire, that
 ‘ God would at all times vouchsafe his presence to his people
 ‘ in that house) will God, said he, in very deed dwell with
 ‘ men on the earth? Behold, heaven, and the heaven of
 ‘ heavens, cannot contain thee: how much less this house
 ‘ which I have built! Yet have thou respect, added he,
 ‘ unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O
 ‘ Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and the prayer
 ‘ which thy servant prayeth before thee this day; that
 ‘ (speaking after the manner of men) thine eyes may be open
 ‘ toward this house night and day: even towards the place of
 ‘ which thou hast said, that thou wouldst put thy name there.
 ‘ That thou mayst hearken to the prayer which thy servant
 ‘ shall

‘ shall make in this place, and hearken to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray towards this place. And hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling place; and when thou hearest, forgive.’

Having thus supplicated the Lord in general terms, he descended to particulars, saying,

‘ If a man trespass against his neighbour, and an oath be required of him; whereupon he come to swear before thine altar in this house: then hear thou from heaven, and do, and judge thy servants; condemning the wicked, to recompence his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness.

‘ If thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy because they have sinned against thee, and they shall turn again to thee, and confess thy name, and shall pray, and make supplication unto thee, towards this house: then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel; and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest unto them and to their fathers.

‘ When the heaven is shut, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray towards this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin when thou dost afflict them: then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, and teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and send rain upon the land which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance.

‘ If there be famine in the land; if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locusts, or caterpillars; if their enemies besiege them in the cities of their land; whatsoever plague or sickness befall them; what prayer or supplication soever shall be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, when every man shall know his own plague, and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands towards this house, then hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and render unto every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest (for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men); that they may fear thee, to walk in thy ways all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers.

‘ Moreover, concerning the stranger which is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out from a far country for thy great name’s sake (for they shall hear of thy great name, and

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‘ of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched-out arm); when he
 ‘ shall come and pray towards this house: then hear thou in
 ‘ heaven, thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the
 ‘ stranger calleth unto thee for; that all the people of the
 ‘ earth may know thy name, and fear thee (as doth thy people
 ‘ Israel) and that they may know that this house which I
 ‘ have builded is called by thy name.

‘ If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whither-
 ‘ soever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto thee towards
 ‘ this city which thou hast chosen, and towards the house that
 ‘ I have built for thy name: then hear thou in heaven their
 ‘ prayer and supplication, and maintain their cause.

‘ If they sin against thee (for there is no man but may sin
 ‘ [*qui non peccet*]); so Jerom, so Pagnine, so Arias Montanus,
 ‘ so Tremellius and Junius turn it, and so Dr. Gell reads it,
 ‘ and contends that it should be read, Essay, page 768.) and
 ‘ thou be angry with them, and deliver them unto the enemy,
 ‘ that they carry them away captives into a land far or near;
 ‘ yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they
 ‘ are carried captives, and shall repent, and make supplication
 ‘ unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives,
 ‘ saying, We have sinned, and have done perversly, and have
 ‘ committed wickedness, and so return unto thee with all their
 ‘ heart, and with all their soul, and pray unto thee towards the
 ‘ land which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which
 ‘ thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy
 ‘ name: then hear thou their prayer and supplication in hea-
 ‘ ven, thy dwelling-place, and maintain their cause, and for-
 ‘ give thy people that have sinned against thee, all their trans-
 ‘ gressions wherein they have transgressed against thee; and
 ‘ give them compassion before them who carried them captive,
 ‘ that they may have compassion on them: for they be thy
 ‘ people and thine inheritance, which thou didst bring forth
 ‘ out of Egypt from the midst of the furnace of iron.

‘ Let now, O my God! I beseech thee, thine eyes be
 ‘ open, and thine ears attentive, unto the prayer that shall be
 ‘ made in this place. Arise now, therefore, O Lord God!
 ‘ into thy resting-place (so he called this fixed temple, in
 ‘ comparision of the moving tabernacle) thou, and the ark of
 ‘ thy strength. And let thy priests, O Lord God! be clothed
 ‘ with salvation, and thy saints rejoice in goodness.’

When Solomon had ended his prayer and supplication to
 the Lord, he arose from his knees, and standing up before the
 altar

altar of the Lord, he blessed the congregation of Israel, saying with a loud voice, 'Blessed be the Lord that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised, not one word having failed of all his good promise which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant. The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers. Let him not leave us, nor forsake us; that he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers. And, added he, let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the Lord, be nigh unto the Lord our God day and night; that he may maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require; that all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else.'

Then turning his speech more directly to the people, 'Let your heart therefore, said he, be perfect with the Lord our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.'

When thus the king had finished his prayer and blessing, both he and all the people with him offered sacrifices before the Lord*. And the Lord, to testify his acceptance of Solomon's prayer, sent fire from heaven, which consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices. And the glory of the Lord filled the house, so that the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because of the glory of the Lord that filled it. And when all the children of Israel saw the fire come down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves upon the pavement with their faces to the ground, and praised the Lord, repeating those words of the cxxxvith psalm, 'For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever.'

At this dedication of the house of the Lord, the king and all Israel joining, they offered a peace-offering unto the Lord of two and twenty thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep; the priests waiting on their offices, and the Levites playing on their instruments of musick, which king David had made to praise the Lord with. And because the brazen altar, which Solomon had made (though it was twenty cubits (or yards) square, 2 Chron. iv. 1.) was too

* 1 Kings viii. 2 Chron. vii.

little to receive the offerings, the king hallowed the middle of the court, that was before the house of the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings there.

Thus king Solomon having held a solemn feast, and all Israel with him, for fourteen days together (seven days for the feast of tabernacles) on the three and twentieth of the second month (which was the eighth day after the feast of tabernacles began, and the next day after it was ended) he sent the people away: who, blessing the king, went unto their tents joyful and glad in heart, for all the goodness that the Lord had shewed unto David and Solomon his servants, and to his people Israel.

After this solemn dedication of the house of the Lord, the Lord appeared again to Solomon by night *, as he had appeared unto him before at Gibeon (1 Kings iii. 5.) and said unto him, ' I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice, and have hallowed it, to put my name there for ever: mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually. And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: then will I establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised David thy father, when I said, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel. But if you shall at all turn from me, you or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes, which I have set before you; but go and serve other gods, and worship them: then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and Israel shall be a proverb and a by-word amongst all people. And at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and shall say, Why hath the Lord done thus unto this land and to this house? And they shall answer, Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon (or put their confidence in) other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the Lord brought upon them all this evil.'

When king Solomon had finished the house of the Lord, he built a stately palace for himself and his queen (Pharaoh's daughter) to dwell in; which was thirteen years in building*, 1 Kings vii. 1. not that he was either more curious, or more magnificent, in building his own house, than in building the Lord's; but he had his materials to provide for his own house, most of which were provided in readiness by his father for the Lord's house; and he employed more workmen, for expedition-sake, about the Lord's house, than about his own. And when this palace was finished, and furnished, he brought up his queen (the daughter of Pharaoh) from the old palace, which was called the city of David, and settled her in the house he had built for her: for he said, 'My wife shall not dwell in the house of David, king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the Lord hath come†.'

Divers other houses also did Solomon afterwards build, whereof that seems to be the chief, which was called the forest of Lebanon‡; which, being an hundred cubits in length, fifty cubits in breadth, and thirty cubits in height, was set upon cedar pillars, in four rows, and is described in 1 Kings vii. 2, &c.

King Solomon, having received great kindness from Hiram king of Tyre (who had furnished him with timber of cedar and of fir, and with gold in abundance); he, in requital, gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee; which bordering upon Tyre, is reckoned by Tremellius and Junius a part of the holy land; and for that reason, perhaps, is called Galilee of the Gentiles, Mat iv. 15. yet others think otherwise.

But when Hiram came from Tyre to see these cities, they did not please him at all. Wherefore, to shew his dislike of them, he asked Solomon, 'What cities are these which thou hast given me, my brother?' and calling them the land of Cabul (that is, displeasing or dirty), he restored them to Solomon, who afterwards rebuilt these cities, and, sending colonies of the children of Israel thither, caused them to dwell therein, which probably occasioned our Saviour to be so conversant afterwards in Galilee.

But though Hiram did not accept Solomon's present, yet no unkindness or breach of friendship ensued thereon between

* A. M. 3014.

† 2 Chron. viii. 11.

‡ 1 Kings ix.

the two kings. For Solomon, having built a navy of ships in Ezion-Geber, at the sea side, in the land of Edom, Hiram not only joined some of his own ships with king Solomon's, but furnished him also with expert mariners to man his fleet to Ophir; from whence they fetched four hundred and twenty (or, as in 2 Chron. viii. 18. four hundred and fifty) talents of gold, of which they are said to have brought four hundred talents to Solomon, and the rest, it is supposed, were spent in the expedition.

King Hiram also is said to have sent to king Solomon six score talents of gold, 1 Kings ix. 14. And the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year, was six hundred sixty and six talents of gold, chap. x. 14. besides what he had of the merchants, and of the kings of Arabia, and the governors of countries, ver. 15. And so plentiful was gold in his time, that silver was of no account; for not only the vessels of his house were of gold, ver. 21. but he made two hundred targets, and three hundred shields, all of beaten gold, ver. 16, 17. A throne also of ivory, overlaid with the best gold, ver. 18, &c.

Now did Solomon experience the fulfilling of that gracious promise, which the Lord had made him (1 Kings iii. 12, 13.) that because he had not asked riches, nor honour, but only wisdom (and that not for ostentation, but for real service, that he might judge and govern his people aright) God gave him both wisdom, riches, and honour; so that he exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. And as they all sought to Solomon, that they might hear his wisdom, which God had put into his heart; so they brought him every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments, and armour, and spices, with horses and mules, at a certain rate year by year.

For God had given Solomon wisdom and understanding, and had enlarged his heart exceedingly; so that he excelled in wisdom all the philosophers and astrologers of Egypt, and of all the east country. And though Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman (mentioned in the titles of Psal. lxxxviii. and Psal. lxxxix) with Chalcol and Darda, were the most celebrated men of those times for wisdom; yet he was wiser than they, and indeed than all men. He spake three thousand proverbs* (most of which are thought to have been lost in the captivity),

* 1 Kings. x. 1 Chron. ix.

and his songs were a thousand and five. He discoursed also of the natures, properties, and virtues of all trees, plants, and herbs; and of beasts, fowls, creeping things and fishes; so that his fame being spread in all nations round about, there came of all people to hear his wisdom, from all the kings of the earth that had heard of it, 1 Kings iv. 29, &c.

Among the many whom the fame of his wisdom and grandeur drew to his court, the Ethiopian queen (called in Matt. xii. 42. the queen of the south, and here the queen of Sheba) was one, who having heard much of the fame of Solomon, and concerning the name of the Lord, had a desire to try his skill in resolving difficult questions; and for that end came from her own country to Jerusalem, attended with a very great train. And having made a royal present to King Solomon of abundance of rich spices, with precious stones, and very much gold (no less than an hundred and twenty talents), she conferred with him, and propounded riddles to him, and he resolved them all. For there was nothing hid from him, of the most abstruse and knotty questions, which he did not open to her.

This filled her with admiration of his profound wisdom. But when she had viewed the house of the Lord, which he had built; and his own house, and had duly considered the oeconomy of his household, the provisions of his table, the degrees and order of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, with their apparel; but more especially the stately ascent he had made, by which he went up to the house of the Lord, she was even overcome with wonder, and said to the king, 'It was indeed a true report which I heard in mine own land of thine acts and of thy wisdom; howbeit, I believed not the words, until I came, and mine own eyes had seen it. And now I find that the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: for thou exceedest the fame that I had heard.'

Then breaking forth into admiration and praise, she added, 'Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom. And blessed be the Lord thy God, who delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel, because the Lord loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made he thee king over them, to do judgment and justice.'

Thus this great queen, having satisfied her curiosity in seeing, and improved her understanding in conversing with
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the wisest of kings, and having been fully answered by him in whatsoever she desired of him, took her leave of the Hebrew court, and returned with her attendants to her own land, laden with a royal present from the king, and filled with admiration of his wisdom and magnificence.

For he kept so great a table, that the daily provision for his house was thirty measures (or cors, as the margin gives it) of fine flour, and threescore of meal. And the Hebrew cor being computed by Godwyn in his Moses and Aaron, l. vi. c. 9. p. 290. to contain five bushels and five gallons, the thirty cors of fine flour make an hundred sixty-eight bushels and six gallons. According to which computation, the sixty cors of meal must make three hundred thirty-seven bushels and four gallons; both sorts, flour and meal, five hundred and six bushels and two gallons; which, reduced to quarters, bring out, if I miscount not, sixty-three quarters, two bushels, and two gallons. For flesh, his daily provision was ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and one hundred sheep; besides harts, roe-bucks, fallow-deer, and fatted fowl. In his stables he had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, which were bestowed in the chariot-cities, and with the king at Jerusalem.

But notwithstanding the great and excellent wisdom where-with God had endowed Solomon*, the high favours he had vouchsafed him, the eminent appearances of God unto him, and the gracious promises he had made him, in case he persevered to walk in his fear, as David had done, and to keep his law; yet Solomon let loose the reins of his affection, not only to many women, but to strange women, strangers to the covenant, such as were not Israelites by nature, nor of Israel by profession; but of the idolatrous nations (Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites), which the Lord had expressly prohibited for Israel in general, and their king in particular, to contract marriage with, Deut. xvii. 17. as knowing they would certainly turn away their hearts after their gods.

And to that degree of excess he went, that he took no less than seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines, who so turned away his heart from following the Lord, that he did evil in the sight of the Lord, going after Ashteroth,

the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites, and built an high-place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that was before Jerusalem; as he did likewise for all his strange wives, which burned incense and sacrifice unto their gods.

This so provoked the anger of the Lord against Solomon, that he said unto him (probably by the prophet Ahijah, mentioned after in ver. 29.) 'Forasmuch as thou hast done thus, and hast not kept my covenant, and my statutes, which I have commanded thee: I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding, in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Yet I will not rend away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to thy son, for David my servant's sake, and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen.'

As therefore the Lord had given unto Solomon peace, and rest from all his enemies, while he kept his commandments, and walked with him; so now that he forsook the Lord, and turned after other gods, the Lord stirred up adversaries against him on every hand.

Of these, Hadad the Edomite was one; who being of the king's seed in Edom, and but a little child, at the time that David brought Edom into subjection, and Joab cut off all the males there (of which see 2 Sam. viii. 14. with 1 Kings xi. 15, 16, 17.) was by his father's servants conveyed into Egypt, and presented unto Pharaoh king of Egypt; from whom he found so great favour, that he not only gave him protection and maintenance, but when he was grown up, bestowed on him in marriage the sister of his own wife, queen Tahpenes. But when Hadad understood that both king David and his general Joab were dead, he prevailed with Pharaoh to send him back to his own country Edom, from whence he did mischief to Israel.

Besides him, God stirred up another adversary to Solomon, one Rezon the son of Eliadah; who flying from his lord Hadadezar, king of Zobah, had gathered a band of men unto him, over whom he became a captain, and seizing on Damascus, reigned therein over Syria, and was an enemy to Israel all the days of Solomon's declining from the way of the Lord.

Another adversary, and in the event the worst of them all, was Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, a

subject and servant of Solomon's, whom the king, when he built Millo (or the fortress) and repaired the breaches of the city of David, observing to be both a mighty man of valour, and very industrious in his business, made ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph.

Him the Lord singled out to be a scourge to Solomon's house; and, in order thereunto, sent the prophet Ahijah, the Shilonite, to meet him in the way when he was gone out of Jerusalem. And they two being alone in the field, the prophet caught hold of the new garment that was on him, and having rent it into twelve pieces, said to Jeroboam, take the ten pieces, 'For thus saith the Lord; the God of Israel: Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee, because they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashteroth, the goddess of the Zidonians; Chemosh, the god of the Moabites; and Milcom, the god of the children of Ammon; and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father.'

'For this cause I will afflict the seed of David, but not for ever; neither will I take the whole kingdom out of Solomon's hand: but he shall have one (entire) tribe, for my servant David's sake, and for the sake of Jerusalem (the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel) that David my servant may have a light (of royal splendor) always before me in Jerusalem. And because my servant David, whom I chose, kept my commandments and my statutes, I will, for his sake, continue his son Solomon prince over Israel during his life; but I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes. And I will take thee, and thou shalt be king over all Israel, and shalt reign according to thy heart's desire. And if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that which is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, then will I be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee.'

Though Jeroboam and the prophet were alone in a field by themselves, when this passed between them, yet Solomon soon got notice of it, and sought to kill Jeroboam upon it; but he, making his escape, fled unto Shishak king of Egypt, and there

there abode with him until the death of Solomon, to which the course of the history hath now brought us. For we read no more of his life or acts, but that having reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years, he slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of his father David.

For the rest of his acts, and all that he did, and his wisdom (of which, no doubt, many and various instances must occur, in the forty years reign of so great and so wise a prince) we are here referred to the book of the acts of Solomon; a book questionless lost, with other excellent pieces of his. In 2 Chron. ix. 29. for a further account of the acts of Solomon, first and last, we are referred to the book of Nathan the prophet, to the prophecy of Ahijah the prophet, and to the visions of Iddo the seer; none of which are now extant, at least under those titles.

Concerning Solomon, and his latter end, the opinions of men are different; but that seems the most charitable, which concludes he repented in his old age, returned to God, and humbling himself before the Lord, wrote his book called Koheleth, Ecclesiastes, or the Preacher, as an acknowledgment of his own apostacy, and a warning or admonition, with instruction, to all others to beware of, and resist the vanities of the world.

Concerning his age also there is some difference. Hugh Broughton gives him but eight and fifty years.* Richard Bloom, in his History of the Old and New Testament, quarto edition (whom for chronology I generally follow) makes him above sixty years of age. But that must be a mistake, if (as he also acknowledges) he came to the throne at eighteen; for it is expressly said, the time of his reign was forty years, 1 Kings xi. 42. 2 Chron. ix. 30. which makes his age to be but fifty-eight years.

Solomon being dead, Rehoboam, his son and successor, went to Schechem, whither all Israel were gathered together to make him king. But being somewhat uneasy under the burdens his father had laid upon them (partly, perhaps, in personal service towards his buildings; and partly also by his purveyors, for provisions for his house, of which the account rises high, in 1 Kings iv.) they were willing to make some better terms for themselves before they set the crown upon his head.

* 1 Kings xii. 2 Chron. x. † A. M. 3029.

Wherefore

Wherefore having sent, and called Jeroboam out of Egypt, as the man they thought most likely to awe Rehoboam, and bring him to a reasonable compliance with their desires, the whole congregation of Israel, having Jeroboam at the head of them (and probably their spokesman), thus spake unto Rehoboam :

‘ Thy father made our yoke grievous ; now, therefore, make thou the grievous service of thy father easier, and his heavy yoke, which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.’

Rehoboam, not thinking it safe, in so weighty a matter, to give an hasty answer, but willing to be advised, before he resolved on a proposition of so great moment, bid them depart for three days, and then come to him again for an answer, which they did.

Mean while, consulting with the old men, who had been counsellors to his father Solomon ; and asking them how they would advise him to answer the people, they said, ‘ If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt answer them kindly, and give them good words, they will be thy servants for ever.’

This good counsel not suiting Rehoboam’s evil humour, he laid it aside ; and betaking himself to his young counsellors, that were grown up with him, he asked them what answer they would advise him to give. They, like young men indeed, that had more heat than judgment, advised him to tell the people, who came to desire a redress of grievances, that his little finger (using a proverbial speech) should be thicker than his father’s loins ; and whereas they had complained that his father had loaded them with a heavy yoke, he would add to their yoke, and make it more heavy ; and if they thought his father had chastised them with whips, they should find he would chastise them with scorpions. Where, by scorpions, is meant a sort of scourges, made of leathern thongs, at the ends of which were fastened either little bones, or plummets of lead, or sharp thorns, to make the punishment the sharper. See Godwyn’s Moses and Aaron, l. v. c. 8.

Rehoboam, for age, was past a child, and old enough, one would think, to have preferred the advice of his old counsellors ; for he was one and forty years old, 1 Kings xiv. 21. But, *Quos vult perdere Deus, hos dementat* ; Whom God will destroy, he bereaves of understanding. The cause was of the Lord, that he might perform his saying, which he had spoken by

by his prophet Ahijah, the Shilonite, to Jeroboam the son of Nebat, chap. xi. 30, 31. Therefore was Rehoboam so void of understanding, that rejecting the good advice of his grave counsellors, he closed with the counsel of his young hot-headed companions. And when Jeroboam, with the people, came to him on the third day for his answer*, he roundly gave it them in those harsh terms, which his young counsellors had dictated to him.

But no sooner had the people heard the answer (which put them out of all hopes of redress) but they (that is, the ten tribes) cried out unanimously, 'What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to your tents, O Israel; and now see to thy own house, David.' (look to thyself Rehoboam, David's son, stand on thy own legs, and expect no help from us). And in this heat they departed to their tents.

Being gone, Rehoboam, to try their temper, sent to them one of his prime ministers, Adoram, who was over the tribute; but they fell presently upon him, and stoned him to death. This made Rehoboam conclude they were in earnest, and think it high time to consult his own safety; wherefore with speed getting into his chariot, he fled to Jerusalem, sensible of his error too late.

Mean while, those ten tribes, which had thus revolted from the house of David (and which, thence-forward, in distinction from the house of Judah, bare the name of Israel) calling Jeroboam unto the congregation, made him king over them.

Thus was that great and goodly kingdom (as a punishment for the idolatry of their king, hastened to execution by the haughty rashness of his son and successor) even almost in its very infancy, split into two very unequal parts, ten against two; which yet must be understood by a *synecdoche partis*; the greater part on either side being taken for the whole. For some of the tribes, in the drawing out the lots of their possessions, being intermixed with others (as Manasseh had divers towns in Issachar and in Asher, Josh. xvii. 11. and Simeon's inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah, Josh. xix. 1.) such of the children of Israel as dwelt in the cities of Judah, continued their subjection to Rehoboam, 1 Kings xii. 17. And perhaps some part of

* 2 Kings xii. 1 Chron. x.

the tribe of Benjamin, bordering upon some of the other tribes that fell away to Jeroboam, might go along with their neighbours, and take him for their king; which might give ground for that saying in the text, ver. 20. There was none (that is, no entire tribe) that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only. For otherwise we find all along, that Benjamin (that is, the main body of that tribe) clave to the house of David, in conjunction with the tribe of Judah.

Rehoboam resenting the affront done him by the Israelites, in killing his treasurer Adoram; and resolving to reduce those his rebellious subjects, to their obedience by force of arms (to which, it is likely, his hot-spur counsellors were not backward to excite him) as soon as he was got safe to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah; out of which, together with the tribe of Benjamin, he mustered an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, that he might bring that kingdom again under his subjection.

But when he was upon his march, the word of God came unto Shemaiah, the man of God, commanding him to speak unto Rehoboam, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, (which in 2 Chron. xi. 3. is called, 'all Israel in Judah and Benjamin') which I take to be all those of the other tribes (which were intermixed with either of those two tribes) and to say unto them, 'Thus saith the Lord, ye shall not go up nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel. Return every man to his house: for this thing is of me.' Which message being delivered to them, they obeyed the word of the Lord, and returned from going against Jeroboam.

This dangerous storm being thus by a divine breath blown over, each of the kings used his endeavours to settle and strengthen himself in his kingdom, but after different manners. For Rehoboam dwelling at Jerusalem, built very many cities for defence in Judah and in Benjamin; fortifying the strong-holds, and placing his own sons for captains in them, with store of provisions and ammunition; whereby he made them exceeding strong.

But that which strengthened him most, and gave him the greatest advantage over his rival Jeroboam, was his and his people's cleaving to the Lord, and keeping the law of

* 1 Kings xii. 2 Chron. xi.

God; which at first, for a while, they did: for it is said, 'They walked for three years in the way of David and Solomon;' which, with respect to Solomon, must be understood of the time, either before he fell into idolatry, or after he repented and returned from it.

Jeroboam, on the contrary, calling to mind, that by the law of God, Deut. xvi. 16. all the males of Israel were to appear before the Lord three times a year, in the place which he should choose, which was now at Jerusalem, the royal seat of Rehoboam's kingdom, he concluded that this would be a means to divest him of his new kingdom. For (said he, within himself) 'If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then will their heart turn again to their Lord, and they will kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.'

Distrust brought fear, and fear led to evil counsel; for, to prevent this surmised danger, it is said he took counsel (either of his own evil heart, or some instruments as wicked as himself) and made two calves of gold; representing thereby the gods of the Egyptians, amongst whom he, for some time past, had lived an exile. And, under pretence of easing his subjects of the toil and expence of going up to Jerusalem to worship, he said unto them, 'It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt.'

These calves he set, the one in Bethel, the other in Dan; the former in the southern quarter, the latter in the northern part of his kingdom, that he might accommodate his people each way, and prevent their going up to Jerusalem. But this thing became a sin, and is branded for devil-worship, 2 Chron. xi. 15.

Jeroboam made also an house of high-places (which the marginal note in the Bishops Bible calls, A temple; * where altars were built for idolatry;) and priests he made of the lowest of the people, who were not of the sons of Levi. For he and his sons cast out the priests and Levites, not suffering them to execute the priest's office unto the Lord; which made the priests and the Levites throughout Israel forsake their suburbs, their possessions, and betake themselves to Judah and Jerusalem for shelter and maintenance. And after them came also to Jerusalem, out of all the tribes of

* 1 Kings xiii.

Israel, such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel, to sacrifice unto the Lord God of their fathers. By which means Rehoboam, and the kingdom of Judah, was very much strengthened.

And whereas God had appointed the feast of tabernacles to begin on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, Lev. xxiii. 34. Jeroboam appointed his feast to begin on the fifteenth day of the eighth month; which therefore is called, in contempt, The month which he had devised of his own heart. And perhaps he might have this reach in his mind, in settling his wrong feast a month after the right feast at Jerusalem, that the people of Judah, their own feast being over, might have opportunity to come to this feast of his, if curiosity and desire of novelty would draw them. *

At this feast of his own appointing, while Jeroboam the king stood by his altar at Bethel, to offer sacrifice to the calf that he had set up there, a man of God came out of Judah by the word of the Lord, and crying against the altar, in the word of the Lord, he said, 'O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord, behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high-places, that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee.'

And because this was a prophecy of a future event, which none there present could live to see (for Josiah, of whom this was predicted, was not born till three hundred years after;) therefore the man of God, to confirm his prophecy, gave a sign, which they should see performed the same day. 'This (said he) is the sign which the Lord hath spoken; behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out.'

As soon as Jeroboam had heard the saying of the man of God, who had cried against the altar in Bethel, he put forth his hand from the altar, and said, Lay hold on him; but his hand, which he put forth against the man of God, dried up; so that he could not pull it in again to him. The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from it, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord.

Which when the king saw, and withal felt himself deprived of the use of his hand, his stout heart for the pre-

* A. M. 3030.

sent relenting, he said unto the man of God, 'Intreat now the face of the Lord thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again.' Whereupon the man of God beseeching the Lord for him, the king's hand was restored to him again, and became as it was before.

The king, sensible of so great a benefit, invited the man of God to go home with him, and refresh himself; offering withal to give him a reward. But the man of God refused; and without any compliment, plainly told the king, If he would give him half his house, he would not go in with him, neither would he eat or drink in that place. For so (said he) was it charged me by the word of the Lord, saying, 'Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest.'

And accordingly the man of God went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel. Yet had he the unhappiness to be betrayed through his too easy credulity; and was drawn into that snare, to the loss of his life, by the false insinuations of another, which the kindness and bounty of king Jeroboam had in vain tempted him unto. And thus it happened:

There dwelt at that time in Bethel an old prophet, whose sons, having been abroad, came home, and told their father all that the man of God had done and said at the altar; which when the old prophet had heard, he inquired of them which way the man of God went; and calling for his ass, rode after him. And having found him sitting under an oak, he invited him to go home with him, and eat bread. The man of God frankly told him what the command of the Lord was to him, and how strict a charge he had received, not to eat or drink in that place, nor to go back by the same way that he came. But the old prophet told him, he was a prophet as well as he; and that an angel had spoken to him by the word of the Lord, and had bidden him bring him back with him into his house, that he might eat and drink; in which, alas! he lied unto him.*

Thus the good man, by giving heed to a pretended message from an angel, delivered to him at second hand by a man (and that too, one he knew not) contrary to an express command from God himself, given immediately to

* Kings xliii.

himself, and miraculously confirmed to him, suffered himself to be misled to his own ruin. For going back with the old prophet to his house, the word of the Lord came to the old prophet, as they sat eating and drinking at the table; and he thereupon cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, Thus saith the Lord, 'Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord (the word which thou hadst from his own mouth) and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee; but camest back, and hast eaten bread and drank water in the place, of which the Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water there; thy dead body shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.'

This, we may conclude, was an hard sentence to the man of God; and the harder, for that it came from the mouth of him who had been the mischievous instrument to betray him into that guilt, which had drawn this judgment on him. But as it was a trial to him, may he be a warning to others!

Now after the man of God had eaten and drank, and was going homewards, a lion met him by the way, and slew him, and his dead body was cast in the way, and the ass on which he rode stood by it, and the lion also; for the lion did not eat the body, nor tear the ass, which was an argument that this was not an accidental thing, and that the lion did not kill the man for hunger, since he did not prey upon the body, nor upon the ass.

The report of this was soon brought, by passengers that observed it, to the city where the old prophet dwelt; who no sooner heard it, but he said, 'It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the Lord: therefore the Lord hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath slain him, according to the word of the Lord which he spake unto him.' Then calling for his ass, he rode to the place, and finding the dead body cast in the way, with the ass and the lion yet standing by, he took up the body of the man of God, and laying it upon the ass, brought it back to the city, that he might mourn over it, and bury it: and having laid the body in his own grave, he, with his family, mourned over the man of God, saying, 'Alas, my brother!' Then charging his sons, he said, 'When I am dead, bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried, and lay my bones beside his bones: for

‘ for the saying which he cried, by the word of the Lord,
 ‘ against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of
 ‘ the high-places, which are in the cities of Samaria, shall
 ‘ surely come to pass.’

The latter part of this sentence, [viz. against all the houses of the high-places which are in the cities of Samaria,] may be supposed to have been added by the compiler of this book of the Kings, who herein speaks according to the time wherein he lived. For we read not in the story before, ver. 1, 2, 3. that the man of God cried against any other, either place or thing, but that altar at Bethel. Nor was the city Samaria built when this was transacted; nor until Omri, having possessed himself of the Israelitish throne (near fifty years after) bought the hill Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver, and having built the city on it, called it, after the name of Shemer, Shomeron, or Samaria, 1 Kings xvi. 24.

A thing so remarkable, and so publick, as was the death of this man of God, may not be supposed could be hid from Jeroboam. * And very likely it is, that although Jeroboam at the first was startled, with the visible sign of the rending of his altar, and the sensible loss of the use of his hand; yet he quickly got over both, and strengthened himself the more in his rebellion against God, when he understood what had befallen the man that had prophesied against his altar. For it follows in the text, ‘ After this
 ‘ thing, Jeroboam returned not from his evil way; but made
 ‘ again, of the lowest of the people, priests of the high-
 ‘ places: so that whosoever would, he consecrated him to
 ‘ be a priest of those places; and this thing became sin
 ‘ unto the house of Jeroboam, not only to cut it off from
 ‘ the kingdom, but even to destroy it from off the face
 ‘ of the earth.’ And who knows but that, as after Pharaoh king of Egypt had wilfully hardened himself against God, the Lord suffered many things to befall him for his further obduration; so Jeroboam, having knowingly and resolvedly rebelled against God, in setting up his calves, whereby he not only grievously sinned himself, but caused Israel also to sin, the Lord might suffer this to befall his prophet, not only to be a general warning to others, how they varied from the command of the Lord, but for a

* 1 Kings xiii.

stumbling-block in particular to Jeroboam; as he afterward threatened a people, who by their sins had highly provoked him, that he would lay stumbling-blocks before them, Jer. vi. 21.

But if Jeroboam was very bad, Rehoboam was not very good. * As Nero, the Roman emperor, had his *quinquennium*, a five years good reign, before he degenerated so foully; so king Rehoboam had his *triennium*, a three years good reign, wherein he walked in the way of David, 2 Chron. xi. 17. before he forsook the Lord. But after those three years were over, he and his people Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and provoked him to jealousy with their sins that they committed, above all that their fathers had done. For they also built them high-places and images, and groves on every high hill, and under every green tree: and there were sodomites also in the land, and they did according to all the abominations of the nations, which the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel.

Wherefore the Lord chastised them by Shishak king of Egypt, who, in the fifth year of Rehoboam, came up against Jerusalem with twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen, and an innumerable company of people with him out of Egypt, the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians: and with this great army, having taken the fenced cities which belonged to Judah and Benjamin, he marched to Jerusalem.

And when fear had seized upon them, came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah, who were gathered together because of Shishak, and this short message he delivered to them: Thus saith the Lord, 'Ye have forsaken me: and therefore have I also left you ' in the hand of Shishak.'

When they heard this, both the princes and the king, humbling themselves, said, The Lord is righteous. And when the Lord saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Shemaiah again, saying, They have humbled themselves; 'therefore I will not destroy ' them, but I will grant them some deliverance, and my ' wrath shall not be poured fully out upon Jerusalem by ' the hand of Shishak; nevertheless they shall be his servants, that they may know the difference between my

* 1 Kings xiv.

2 Chron. xii.

' service,

‘service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.’

So the king of Egypt, entering Jerusalem, took away the treasures of the house of the Lord * (the Lord so permitting it) and the treasures of the king’s house, he even took away all; carrying away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made, 2 Chron. ix. 15, 16. Instead of which, king Rehoboam afterwards made shields of brass, and committed them to the care of the chief of his guards that kept the entrance of the king’s house; and when the king entered into the house of the Lord, the guards came and fetched the shields, and brought them again into the guard-chamber.

As this depredation by the Egyptian king brought heaviness upon Judah, so another occasion offered, which brought sorrow upon the Israelitish court. For young Abijah, king Jeroboam’s son, a prince of good hope, falling sick, the king, his father, willing to know of the prophet Ahijah what would become of the child, yet not willing the prophet should know that it was his child, desired his wife to disguise herself, that it might not be known who she was, and so to go and inquire of the prophet. Wherein he sufficiently shewed his folly, in thinking the prophet, as a prophet, could tell what should become of the child, and yet could not tell whose child it was.

The queen, however, disguising herself, as her husband had directed, and taking with her a present for the prophet of ten loaves of bread, some wafers, and a cruse or pot of honey; went to Shiloh, to the house where the prophet Ahijah dwelt.

He, good man, through extreme age, had lost his sight. But before she came in, the Lord had said unto him, Behold, the wife of Jeroboam cometh to ask a thing of thee for her son, for he is sick: thus, and thus, shalt thou say unto her, for she will feign herself to be another woman.

When therefore Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, he said, ‘Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam: why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy news.’ Then, without staying for her message to him, he began his message thus: ‘Go, tell Jeroboam, thus saith the Lord God of Israel,

* 1 Kings xiv.

2 Chron. xii.

' Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and
 ' made thee prince over my people Israel, and rent the
 ' kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it to
 ' thee, and yet thou hast not been as my servant David,
 ' who kept my commandments, and who followed me with
 ' all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine
 ' eyes, but hast done evil above all that were before thee
 ' (for thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten
 ' images, to provoke me to anger, and hast cast me behind
 ' thy back :) therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the
 ' house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every
 ' male, and him that is shut up and left in Israel ; and will
 ' take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a
 ' man taketh away dung, till it be all gone. Him that
 ' dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat ; and him
 ' that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat ; for
 ' the Lord God hath spoken it. Arise thou therefore, get
 ' thee to thine own house ; and when thy feet shall enter
 ' in, the child shall die : and all Israel shall mourn for him
 ' and bury him, because in him there is found some good
 ' thing towards the Lord God of Israel, in the house of
 ' Jeroboam. Moreover, added he, the Lord will raise him
 ' up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Je-
 ' roboam in that day.' Then stopping on a sudden (as it
 were correcting himself) he said, ' But what, even now.'
 By those abrupt speeches, signifying, that he needed not have
 spoken in the future tense [the Lord will raise him up a
 king :] for he was even now already in being. Then pur-
 suing his former subject, he added, ' For the Lord will smite
 ' Israel as a reed is shaken in the water * (that is, by
 ' continual commotions in the kingdom ;) and he will root
 ' up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their
 ' fathers, and will scatter them beyond the river Euphrates,
 ' because they have made their groves, provoking the Lord
 ' to anger ; and he will give up Israel, because of the sins
 ' of Jeroboam, who not only sinned himself, but made Israel
 ' also to sin.'

With this doleful message Jeroboam's wife departing, re-
 turned to Tirzah (which was then the royal city before
 Samaria was built) and when she came to the threshold of
 the door, the child died. And they buried him, and all

* 1 Kings xiv.

2 Chron. xii.

Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servant Ahijah the prophet.

As for Rehoboam, the king of Judah, though he lived twelve years after Shishak king of Egypt had sacked Jerusalem, and brought him into subjection; yet we read not much of his publick acts afterwards. It is said, indeed, there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually, 2 Chron. xii. 15. but with what success is not mentioned. Of his wives and children there is mention, 2 Chron. xi. 18. and he seems to be an uxorious man, for he is said to have desired a multitude of wives, ver. 23. And it appears he took eighteen wives and threescore concubines, and begat eight and twenty sons and threescore daughters. And as of all his wives and concubines he loved Maachah best, (who is also called Michaiah, 2 Chron. xiii. 2. and there said to be the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah; but in 2 Chron. xi. 21. she is called the daughter of Absalom, as in 1 Kings xv. 2. the daughter of Abishalom, from which, by contraction, is drawn Absalom; not the rebellious son of David, whose issue failed, 2 Sam. xviii. 18. but another of Gibeah in Benjamin, who is supposed to be the father of Uriel, and so Maachah to be grand-daughter of this Abishalom or Absalom) so of all his sons, he made Abijah, called also Abijam, 1 Kings xiv. 31. whom he had by his beloved wife Maachah, chief; preferring him to be ruler among his brethren, as designing him for his successor in the kingdom, 2 Chron. xi. 21, 22.

And though, from his ill-advised answer to his people at his coming to the crown, whereby he lost ten parts out of twelve of his kingdom, he is in common speech branded with folly; yet, with respect to his administration, after he was settled in the government, he is said to have dealt wisely, ver. 23. However, in the seventeenth year of his reign, which was the eight and fiftieth year of his age, he slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David, and Abijah his son reigned in his stead.

It was in the eighteenth year of Jeroboam king of Israel *, that Abijah began to reign over Judah. And though his reign was but short (for he reigned but three years) yet he did more than his father had done in his longer reign of seventeen years. For, resolving to give battle to Jeroboam, he led forth an army of valiant men of war, consisting of four hundred thousand fighting men.

* A. M. 3047.

Jeroboam too, as he had a larger kingdom, intending to overpower him with numbers, * drew up an army against him, of eight hundred thousand chosen men, being mighty men of valour.

Abijah, nothing daunted at the double number of his enemy's forces, when the battle was set in array on both sides, standing up upon mount Zemeraim, which is mount Ephraim, thus bespake the adverse army :

‘ Hear me, thou Jeroboam, and all Israel. Ought ye not to know, that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever; even to him, and to his sons, by a covenant of salt (which, as the property of it is to preserve things from putrefaction, is an emblem of duration and stability;) yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, is risen up, and hath rebelled against his lord, and there gathered unto him vain men, the children of Belial, and have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was but young (in the government) and tender-hearted, and could not withstand them. And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the Lord, in the hand of the sons of David, and ye be a great multitude; and there are with you golden calves, which Jeroboam made for gods. Have ye not cast out the priests of the Lord, and the Levites; and have made you priests after the manner of the people of other lands? so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams, (a way of your own devising) the same may be priest to them that are no gods. But as for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken him; and the priests, which minister unto the Lord, are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business; and they burn unto the Lord, every morning and every evening, burnt-sacrifices and sweet incense; the shew-bread also they set in order upon the pure table, and the candlestick of gold, with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening; for we keep the charge of the Lord our God, but ye have forsaken him. And behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests, with sounding trumpets, are ready to cry alarm against you. Wherefore, O children of Israel! fight ye not against the Lord God of your fathers, for ye shall not prosper.’

* 1 Kings xv.

While thus Abijah was expostulating with the Israelitish army, Jeroboam, more mindful how he might, by adding policy to force, obtain the more full and easy victory, caused a part of his army to fetch a compass, and place themselves in ambush behind Judah. So that when Abijah had ended his oration, the men of Judah, looking back, found themselves inclosed by their enemies, battle being both before and behind them.

In this strait they cried unto the Lord, and the priests sounded with the trumpets; then gave the men of Judah a shout, and God, regarding the cry of Judah, smote Jeroboam and Israel before Abijah and Judah. Whereupon the children of Israel fled before Judah; and God having delivered them into their hand, Abijah and his people slew them with a very great slaughter; so that there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men.

Very memorable was this battle, and may well be reckoned for one of the battles of the Lord; wherein four hundred thousand men, under the disadvantage of an ambush, put eight hundred thousand valiant men to flight, and slew five hundred thousand of them upon the place.

Thus the children of Israel, who were wholly fallen away to gross idolatry, were brought under at that time; and the children of Judah (though not so good as they should have been, yet comparatively good, as being better than Israel) prevailed, because they (at this time at least) relied upon the Lord God of their fathers.

The battle being over, Abijah, that he might improve his victory, pursued after Jeroboam, and took from him divers considerable cities, with the towns and territories belonging to them, of which Bethel was one, where Jeroboam had set up one of his calf-idols; by which means Jeroboam was so weakened, that he never recovered strength again in the days of Abijah.

But Abijah grew very great; and having enlarged his family, by marrying fourteen wives, and begetting two and twenty sons, and sixteen daughters, he slept with his fathers (which is a periphrasis of dying) and was buried in the city of David. The rest of his acts, and his ways and sayings, were recorded in the commentaries of Iddo the prophet, a book long since lost.

To Abijah succeeded his son Aza in the kingdom of Judah, in the twentieth year of the reign of Jeroboam over Israel*.

And because his heart was perfect with the Lord, and he did that which was right and good in the eyes of the Lord his God, he had a peaceable entry to his throne, and the land was quiet for the first ten years of his reign, that he might reform the abuses which had been brought in under the former reigns. Accordingly applying himself to the work, he first removed the sodomites out of the land. Then he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high-places* (as far as he could) and brake down the images, and cut down the groves, throughout all the cities of Judah. And because Maachah, his mother, had made an idol in a grove, he not only destroyed her idol, but removed her from being queen. And having brought into the house of the Lord the holy things, which his father and himself had dedicated (vessels of silver and of gold) he commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to keep the law.

In this time also of peace and tranquillity he builded cities in Judah, which he fenced with walls and towers, and with gates and bars, for the strength and security of his kingdom.

But after this ten years time of quiet, a storm rose upon Judah; for Zerah, the Ethiopian king†, came forth against them with a mighty host. Afa was not unprovided, but had a considerable army in readiness, of five hundred and four-score thousand valiant fighting men, well armed, which he led forth against the Ethiopians. But Zerah's host was well nigh double the number; for it consisted of a thousand thousand fighting men, besides three hundred chariots. King Afa, seeing himself so much over-matched in numbers, betook himself to the Lord his God for help; and in an humble confidence crying unto him, said, 'Lord, It is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rely on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God, let no man prevail against thee.'

So acceptable was this short but hearty prayer of Afa's to the Lord, that he thereupon smote the Ethiopians, and caused them to fly before Afa and Judah, who pursued them even to Gerar (which signifies a striving) where they received so great an overthrow, that they could not recover themselves. Wherefore Afa and his people smote all the cities round about Gerar (the Lord having struck a terror into them); and when they had taken the spoils of the cities, which afforded them

* 2 Chron. xiv. † A. M. 3060.

great store of plunder, and the spoil of their enemy's host, they smote also the tents of them that kept cattle; and carrying away sheep and camels in abundance, they returned to Jerusalem.

But the Spirit of the Lord coming upon Azariah, the son of Oded (whom some take to be the same with the prophet Iddo, mentioned before, chap. xiii. 22.) he went out to meet Afa, and said unto him, 'Hear ye me, Afa, and all Judah and Benjamin, the Lord is with you, while ye are with him; and if ye seek him he will be found of you (as ye have had experience in this expedition); but, notwithstanding that, if ye forsake him he will forsake you'* Now, for a long season, Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law. And in those times there was no safety, either in going out, or coming in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries, and nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city; for God did vex them with all adversity. But when in their trouble they did turn unto the Lord God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. 'Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded.'

When Afa had heard these words, and the prophecy also of Oded the prophet (or rather, perhaps, of Ahijah the prophet, mentioned in 1 Kings xiv. from verse 7, to 17. and recorded by Oded, which it is probable Azariah might then shew him) he took courage, and put away the rest of the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim; and having renewed the altar of the Lord, which was before the porch of the Lord's house, he gathered together all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them, out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon (for so they are called, who out of the other tribes fell to him; and they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the Lord his God was with him). And being thus assembled at Jerusalem in the third month (in which the feast of weeks, or of harvest, commanded by God, Exod. xxiii. 16. and Deut. xvi. 16. happened to fall) in the fifteenth year of the reign of Afa, they offered unto the Lord, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen, and seven thousand sheep; and at the same time entered into a covenant,

* 1 Kings xv. 2 Chron. xv.

that they would seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and soul; so that whosoever, whether small or great, man or woman, would not seek the Lord God of Israel, should be put to death. This covenant they confirmed by oath unto the Lord, which they took so cheerfully and heartily, that the Lord accepted their service therein, and gave them rest round about.

But while things thus mended in Judah, some considerable changes happened among the Israelites. For Jeroboam did not long survive the overthrow he had received from Abijah; but being smitten of God, he died in the first or second year of Asa king of Judah. And Nadab his son, who succeeded him both in his kingdom and in his sins, had scarce completed two years reign, when Baasha, of the house of Issachar, conspiring against him, slew him at the siege of Gibbethon, a town belonging to the Danites, but held then by the Philistines.

Baasha, by this means possessing himself of the Israelitish throne, smote all the house of Jeroboam, until he had utterly destroyed him, not leaving one of his family alive, to the fulfilling the saying of the Lord, which he spake by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite; * 'Because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he sinned, and which he made Israel sin by his provocation, wherewith he provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger.'

But though Baasha thus severely executed the just judgment of God upon Jeroboam's house, yet he himself departed not from Jeroboam's sins, but did evil in the sight of the Lord, walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin, wherewith he made Israel to sin. For as Jeroboam set up his idol-calves at first, to keep the Israelites, his subjects, from going up to worship at Jerusalem (whither God had commanded them to go) lest he should thereby lose his people and kingdom; so Baasha, observing his subjects out of all parts of Israel fell in great numbers to Asa king of Judah, when they saw the Lord his God was with him, and that he had begun a good work of reformation, went up with his forces against Judah, and built Ramah; to the intent that he might let none (any more) go out or come in to Asa, king of Judah.

Asa, not thinking himself strong enough to encounter Baasha, took all the silver and gold that was left in the

* 1 Kings xv. 2 Chron. xvi.

treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of his own house also, and sending them for a present to Benhadad king of Syria (whose seat was then at Damascus) put him in mind, by his ambassadors, of the league that had antiently been between them and their fathers; requesting him to break his league with Baasha, and cause him to give over his enterprise, and to depart from him.

Benhadad, tempted with so rich a present, sent his armies against the cities of Israel, and smote divers of them; which when Baasha heard of, he left building Ramah, and returned to Tirzah, his royal city (for Samaria was not yet built) that he might take care of his own affairs. And as soon as Baasha was gone with his forces, Afa, by proclamation, calling in all Judah to the work, pulled down the building which Baasha had set up at Ramah, and carrying away the stones and timber thereof, did therewith build two cities for himself, Gebah of Benjamin, and Mizpah.

But while king Afa was thus employed, Hanani the seer came unto him, and said, * ' Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thy hand; ' that is, have withdrawn themselves, and left thee open to thy enemy, and destitute of help, if he should assault thee again. Then reminding him of the great deliverance God had formerly given him from Zerah the Ethiopian king, he put him to consider how great an host the Ethiopians and Lubims were, (much greater than that of Baasha, which he was so afraid of) and yet, because he then relied on the Lord, the Lord delivered them into his hands. For the eyes of the Lord (said the prophet) run to and fro through the whole earth, that he may shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him. Then, for a conclusion, he tells him plainly and bluntly, ' Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.'

This plain-dealing, though from a man of God, king Afa, as good as he was, could not brook; but being wroth with the seer, put him into prison: for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And whether the people took the seer's part, or for what other reason, is uncertain; but it seems the king oppressed some of the people at the same time.

* 1 Kings xvi.

2 Chron. xvi.

Better treatment had Jehu, the son of this Hanani the seer, from Baasha king of Israel, unto whom the Lord sent him to denounce his judgment in these terms:

“Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel, and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin, and to provoke me to anger with their sins: behold, I will take away the posterity of Baasha, and the posterity of his house, and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. Him that dieth of Baasha in the city, shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth of his in the fields, shall the fowls of the air eat.”

This was sharp and home; yet we do not read that Baasha fell foul on the prophet for delivering to him this dreadful doom.

So little agreement is there of chronology in the reigns of these kings, * and some others, after the division of the kingdom, that I will not pretend to give an exact account thereof; especially since the clue I have hitherto mostly followed doth here, as in some other places, fail me.

Probable it is, that Baasha did not live long after the judgment, mentioned before, was delivered to him by the man of God. He is said to have slept with his fathers, and Elah his son to have succeeded him in the six-and-twentieth year of Asa king of Judah, 1 Kings xvi. ver. 6. and 8. yet Baasha's expedition against Asa, in order to build Ramah, is said to be in the six-and-thirtieth year of the reign of Asa, 2 Chron. xvi. 1.

Some I know (as Tremellius and Junius) to reconcile this difference, would have that six-and-thirtieth year to relate (not to Asa's reign, but) to the date of the kingdom of Judah, from the division of the kingdom of Israel, at Rehoboam's coming to the crown; and to be but the fourteenth year of the reign of Asa. But I see not how that can be, since this expedition of Baasha, for the building of Ramah, was some time after Asa had defeated the Ethiopian king; for Hanani the seer upbraided Asa with having forgotten the deliverance God had given him from the Ethiopians, when he craved help of the Syrians against Baasha. And yet that defeat of the Ethiopians, or at least the covenant for reformation, which thereupon Judah en-

* 1 Kings xvi.

2 Chron. xvi.

tered into, is expressly placed in the third month of the fifteenth year of king Afa's reign. So that that six and-thirtieth year, in which Baasha is said to go up to build Ramah (and which seems to have been a good while after the reformation-covenant made in Afa's fifteenth year, for upon the making of that covenant, the Lord gave them rest round about, 2 Chron. xv. 15.) can by no good computation be made to be the fourteenth year of Afa's reign. I conjecture, therefore, that this difference has been occasioned through a slip of some transcriber's pen. But leaving others to their own conjectures also, having given this hint, to secure myself from the reader's censure in point of chronology, too difficult in these times to be made exactly out, I resume the thread of the story.

Baasha dying in the six-and-twentieth year of the reign of king Afa, Elah his son succeeded him, and reigned over Israel two years, or rather part of two years: for in his second year, he being in Tirzah, drinking in the house of Arza his steward, his servant Zimri, captain of half his chariots, having conspired against him, went in and killed him, in the seven-and-twentieth year of Afa, and reigned in his stead.

And although his reign was very short (for he reigned but seven days) yet in that short time, and as soon as he sat on his throne, as if he had been raised for nothing else but to execute the judgment of the Lord, denounced by the prophet Jehu, against the house of Baasha, he slew all the family of Baasha, not leaving him one alive, either of his kinsfolks or friends.

Mean while, the army being encamped against Gibbethon (then held from Israel by the Philistines) and hearing there that Zimri had not only conspired against, but also slain Elah their king, they made Omri, the captain of the host, king over Israel that day in the camp.

Omri, thereupon raising his siege from before Gibbethon, led his army up to Tirzah, the royal city, and there besieged Zimri, * who, not able to defend the place when he saw the city was taken, went into the royal palace, and setting it on fire, burnt both it, and himself in it, and so died.

Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts; half the people following Tibni, the son of Ginath, to make

* A.M. 3075.

him king; and the other half following Omri, but Omri's party in time prevailing Tibni died, and Omri reigned.

He is said to have begun his reign over Israel in the one-and-thirtieth year of Afa king of Judah, and to have reigned twelve years; and his son Ahab to have succeeded him, in the eight-and-thirtieth year of Afa; which cannot be, unless Omri's twelve years be computed from Elah's death, and take in the time wherein Tibni and Omri were competitors for the crown, which is supposed to have been four years; and on that reckoning it will come near the matter.

However, Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that had been before him; for he not only walked in all the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger with their vanities; but he made laws (called long after the Statutes of Omri) to bind the people thereunto, as appears from the words of the prophet Micah, ch. vi. 16.

As for his publick acts, though it is probable there might be some that were remarkable, because we are here referred to the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel for them, and for his might which he shewed, yet there being no mention of his acts, or of his might, in the books of the Chronicles now extant, we can give no further account of him, save that he bought the hill of Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver (in value seven hundred and fifty pounds sterling) and thereupon built the city, which from Shemer he called Samaria, and which was afterwards the metropolis and royal seat of the Israelitish kingdom.

To him succeeded Ahab his son, in the eight-and-thirtieth year of Afa king of Judah, who reigning two-and-twenty years over Israel in Samaria, did so far outstrip his father in wickedness, that he is said to have done evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him; and to have provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger more than all the kings of Israel that went before him had done. For as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Etlibaal king of the Zidonians; and having thereupon built an house for Baal in Samaria, and reared up an altar to Baal therein, he served Baal, and worshipped him, and made a grove for idols.

By

By these abominations highly provoked, the Lord sent Elijah the Tishbite* (who is also called Elias, Luke iv. 25.) to denounce a judgment against Israel, who, coming unto Ahab, said, 'As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand (that is, whom I wait upon, or whose servant I am) there shall not be either rain or dew these years (to wit, three years and six months: for so both our Saviour, in Luke iv. 25. and the apostle James, chap. v. 17. bound the time) but according to my word,' that is, as the Lord shall speak by me.

After the prophet had delivered this message, that he might himself be out of the reach of the famine which this drought would produce, and out of the reach of the wrathful king, the word of the Lord came to him again, saying, 'Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, which is before Jordan: of which brook thou shalt drink; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.'

Thither therefore went Elijah, as the Lord had appointed him; and taking up his abode by the brook, the ravens brought him bread and flesh morning and evening, and he drank of the brook; but it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

Then came the word of the Lord to him again, saying, 'Get thee to Zarephath (called Sarepta, Luke iv. 26.) a town belonging to Zidon, and dwell there; for I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.' So he arose, and went to Zarephath, and coming to the gate of the city, saw the widow woman there gathering of sticks; and calling to her, he desired her to fetch him a little water, that he might drink.

As she was going to fetch it, he called to her again, desiring her to bring a morsel of bread in her hand. Whereupon she answered, 'As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not so much as a cake, but an handful only of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and behold, I am gathering a few sticks, that I may go in, and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it; and then I expect no other, but to die for want of more food.'

Then said Elijah to her, 'Fear not, go and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it

* 1 Kings xvii. † A. M. 3087.

unto me; and afterwards make for thee and thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord shall send rain upon the earth.

The poor woman, whose heart the Lord had before disposed to receive the prophet (though she knew him not) made no dispute, but did according as he bid her; and she, and he, and her family, did eat (of this little store) many days: for the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail; but held out, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah.

But though this woman and her son, for her care of the prophet, were preserved alive from the famine; yet after this, and while the prophet yet tarried with her, it came to pass that the woman's son fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him, which is a periphrasis of dying. Whereupon the sorrowful mother, coming to Elijah, said, 'What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come unto me, to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?'

Elijah thereupon wished her to give him her son, and withal took him out of her bosom; and carrying him up into the chamber where he used to lie, he laid him down upon his own bed; and crying unto the Lord, said, 'O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow, with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?' Then stretching himself upon the child three times, he still cried unto the Lord, saying, 'O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again.' And the Lord was graciously pleased to hear the voice of his servant Elijah, so that the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. Then took Elijah the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivering him to his mother, said, 'See, thy child is alive.' At which the joyful mother said, 'Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.'

When the time was near expired which God had appointed for the drought to last, the word of the Lord came to Elijah, saying, 'Go, shew thyself unto Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth.' Whereupon Elijah set forward to go unto Ahab. But in the mean while, the famine raging sorely

throughout Israel, Ahab calling to him Obadiah, the governor of his house, a man that greatly feared the Lord, and shewed it by preserving the Lord's prophets, when Jezebel cut many of them off; he said unto him, 'Let us go through the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks, to see if we can find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.'

Dividing thereupon the land between them, with intention to search it thoroughly, Ahab, the king, without guard or attendance, went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself. And Providence so disposing, it fell out, that as Obadiah was on his way, Elijah met him; and Obadiah knowing him, fell on his face, and with joy said, 'Art thou that my lord Elijah?' I am, replied he: and therefore go tell thy lord, that Elijah is here.

Alas! said Obadiah, 'What great offence have I committed; that thou shouldst deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab to slay me? As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom (that is subject to, or in league with Israel) whither the king hath not sent to seek thee; and when they said he is not there, he took an oath of the kingdom or nation that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, Go tell thy lord, behold, Elijah is here. Whereas it may so come to pass, that as soon as I am gone from thee, the spirit of the Lord may carry thee I know not whither; and then, if I should go and tell Ahab thou art here, and he cannot find thee, he will slay me. But I hope I have not deserved so ill of thee; for I thy servant fear the Lord, and have done so from my youth. Hath it not been told my lord what I did, when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord? How I hid an hundred of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and provided them food? and yet now thou sayest, Go tell thy lord Elijah is here, and so he may slay me.' Nay, replied Elijah, do not fear that; for as the Lord thy God liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to-day.'

With this assurance away went Obadiah to find king Ahab; whom having found, and told him that Elijah was come, he hastened to meet Elijah; and, as soon as he was come to him, saluted him with this rough greeting, 'Art thou he that troubleth Israel?' The prophet not behind with him, bluntly

answered, 'No, I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim. Now, therefore (added he) that it may appear who have been the troublers of Israel, send and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, with the four hundred prophets of the groves, which feed at Jezebel's table.'

Accordingly Ahab summoned the children of Israel, and with them the prophets (at least those of Baal) to assemble at mount Carmel. And there Elijah coming among them, said to the people, 'How long halt ye between two opinions? If, upon the trial now to be made, it shall appear to you that the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.' But the doubtful people answered him not a word.

Then said Elijah to them, 'I, even I only (that I know of) remain a prophet; but the prophets of Baal (besides the four hundred prophets of the groves, who perhaps were not come) are four hundred and fifty men. Let therefore, for the deciding of this controversy, be two bullocks given us, and let them choose out one of the two bullocks for themselves, and let them cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, but put no fire under. And I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under neither. And call ye (said he, turning to Baal's prophets) on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God.'

This proposition so pleased the people, that they said it is well spoken. Come then, said Elijah to the prophets of Baal, seeing ye are many, do ye begin. 'Choose ye one of the bullocks for yourselves, and dress it, and call on the name of your gods; but put no fire under.'

The prophets, thus provoked, took their bullock, and dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, 'Baal hear us.' But there was no voice, nor any that answered. Whereupon they leaped either upon the altar, or up and down at or about the altar that was made.

When they had thus toiled themselves till noon, Elijah (not in a light spirit, but in an holy zeal against their idolatry

and contempt of their idol, and the more effectually to expose them to the people) mocked them, and bid them cry aloud: for, said he, your god is such a god, as is either talking, and so doth not heed you; or he is in an hot pursuit, or in a journey, and so cannot mind you; or (which is worse) perhaps he is fast asleep, and must with loud calling be awaked before he can hear you.

Whether those prophets were sensible that Elijah did deride them or not, yet they stretched their throats, and cried aloud; and when they found that did not avail, they cut themselves, after their manner, with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them: This was the manner of the heathen antiently to express extreme sorrow, which God had expressly forbidden his people to imitate, Levit. xix. 28. and Deut. xiv. 1.

Having thus gone on, in a sort of prophetick fury, from mid-day to the time of offering the evening-sacrifice; and there being no voice, nor answer given them, nor any appearance that they were regarded, Elijah then invited all the people to come near unto him, which they did.

Then that he might repair the altar of the Lord, which was broken down, and thereby give the people a fair invitation, by reuniting themselves to their brethren of Judah, to repair the breach long since made in the tribes of Israel, he took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, 'Israel (a prevailer with God) shall be thy name' (intimating thereby the faith and firm confidence he had, that he should, at this time, and in this great trial, prevail with the Lord; and through his powerful help should prevail over his and their enemies, the prophets of Baal), and therewith built an altar in the name of the Lord, and made a fair trench about it. And having put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood, he gave order that four barrels of water should be poured upon the sacrifice and the wood. Which being done, he caused it to be repeated a second and third time, until the water ran about the altar, and then he filled the trench also with water. The intention of which seems to be, that he might prevent all suspicion of collusion; and render the expected miracle more conspicuous and incontestable, when they should see a fire break forth and burn, contrary to its nature, in the midst of water.

All things thus disposed in due order, and the time of the offering of the evening-sacrifice being come, Elijah the prophet drew near, and addressing himself by prayer to God, said, 'O Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I thy servant have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that their heart may be turned back again from their idols unto thee.'

No sooner had the prophet, in the strength of faith, and fervency of his spirit, poured forth his supplication to the Lord, but the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed not the burnt-sacrifice only and the wood, but the very stones and the dust, licking up also the water that was in the trench. At sight whereof, the people falling on their faces, brake forth into admiration and acknowledgment, saying, 'The Lord he is the God, the Lord he is the God.'

Elijah had a watchful eye on the false prophets (who it seems were providing to shift for themselves); and not willing to slip the opportunity of freeing Israel from so many wicked instruments, he called out to the people to apprehend the prophets of Baal. Which being done, he brought them down to this brook Kishon, and slew them (that is, caused them to be slain) there. This act of his, though it carried in it a shew of great severity, was yet pursuant to the law of God, Deut. xiii. 6, to 12. suited to that dispensation; besides that it did typically set forth how the inward enemies of the soul should be dealt with.

Then turning himself to king Ahab, he advised him to get up, and to eat and drink to refresh himself (not sparing any longer, as before, for fear the provision should not hold out): for, said he, 'There is a sound of abundance of rain.'

But while Ahab was eating and drinking, Elijah going up to the top of Carmel, cast himself down on the earth; and putting his face between his knees, bid his servant go up, and look towards the sea. The servant went up and looked, and returning, told him he saw nothing. Whereupon he bid him go again seven times. The servant did so: and at the seventh time, said, 'Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand.' The prophet thereupon bid him go, and say unto Ahab, 'Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.' Ahab perceiving the sky overcast, so that the heaven was grown black with clouds.

clouds and wind, hasted away to Jezreel, and there was a great rain. Yet the hand of the Lord (that is, his power) was on Elijah, strengthening him so, that girding up his loins (whereby he tucked up his long garment, which would otherwise have been an hindrance to him) he ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

Being got thither, the king quickly related to Jezebel his queen* all that Elijah had done; and particularly how he had slain all the prophets. At which the revengeful queen was so enraged, that, by a messenger sent on purpose, she said to Elijah, 'So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them, by to-morrow this time.'

When Elijah had received this menacing message, considering with himself the vindictive nature of the queen, and the power she had with the king her husband, he thought it his duty, having performed the service he came for, to provide in time for his own safety. Wherefore, taking this for a providential warning, he arose, and leaving Jezreel, went for his life till he came to Beersheba, a city belonging to Judah, and so out of the dominion of the king of Israel;† and leaving his servant there, he himself went a day's journey further into the wilderness: where sitting down under a juniper-tree, he requested for himself that he might die, saying, 'It is enough now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers, that my life should be prolonged.'

While thus he lay under the juniper-tree, his spirit oppressed with sorrow, and his body wearied with long travel, he fell asleep. But he had not slept long, before an angel touching him, bid him arise and eat. He thereupon starting up, saw a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse (or pot) of water standing at his head: of which he eat and drank, and laid him down again. But the angel of the Lord coming again, and touching him the second time, said unto him, 'Arise, and eat; for the journey is too great for thee to go through with that food.' He thereupon arising, did eat and drink again: and went in the strength of that meat, forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb, the mount of God.

Being got to Horeb, he entered into a cave, and lodged there. And behold the word of the Lord came to him, and

• 1 Kings xix. † A. M. 3092.

asked

asked him, 'What dost thou here, Elijah?' He answered, 'I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars (that is, have forsaken thy worship) and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, I only (so far as I know) am left, and they seek my life also to take it away.'

Then said the Lord to him, 'Go forth, and stand upon the mount before me.' Which he doing, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord: but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake: but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire: but the Lord was not in the fire. By all which emblems the prophet was instructed, that the Lord was sufficiently able to overturn his enemies by a mighty power, though he did not to choose to appear in that way. But after the fire there was a still small voice; which, when Elijah heard, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and going out, stood in the entrance of the cave: where he heard a voice saying to him, as before, 'What dost thou here, Elijah?' To which, when he had given the same answer which he had given to the like question before, the Lord said unto him, 'Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest thither, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.'

'And Jehu, the son of Nimshi, shalt thou cause to be anointed king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat, of Abel-meholah, shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael, shall Jehu slay. And him that escapeth the sword of Jehu, shall Elisha slay. For though thou thinkest that thou art left alone; yet have I seven thousand left me in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed (that is, worshipped) him.'

Elijah hereupon departed thence, in his way found Elisha, who was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, himself following the twelfth; and as he passed by him, he cast his mantle upon him.

Elisha, who understood the meaning of the mantle being thrown upon him, straightway leaving the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, 'Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and

‘ my mother :’ that is, take my leave of my relations. But Elijah, giving him a short answer, only said, ‘ Go, return : for what have I done to thee ?’ Elisha thereupon turning back from him, slew a yoke of his own oxen, and not staying for other wood, boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen ; and having given it to the people to eat, followed Elijah, and became his servant.

While these things were transacting in Israel, Asa king of Judah, having reigned thirty-and-nine years, * and in that time grown from better to worse, was taken with a disease in his feet, which held him to his death. And although it increased upon him, until it was grown very violent, yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord ; but, as his own name signified a physician (or healer of sicknesses) he put his confidence in the physicians. Wherefore the Lord left him to his doctors : and after three years misery, he ended his life in the one-and-fortieth year of his reign, and was buried in his own sepulchre which he had made for himself, in the city of David, being laid in the bed which was filled with sweet odours, and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecary’s art, and they made a very great burning for him.

His son Jehoshaphat, being then five-and thirty years of age, began his reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. And in his entrance into the government, he strengthened himself against Israel, by placing forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and setting garrisons in the cities of Ephraim, which Asa his father had taken, † and throughout the land of Judah. And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first way of his father David. So we read it here, ver. 3. But it may be questioned, whether David be not here slipped in, in the place of Asa : for in 1 Kings xxii. 43. and in 2 Chron. xx. 32. Asa is named, not David ; and it is certain, Asa’s first days were better than his last. But if we read it (as here) in the first ways of his father David, we must understand it of David’s ways, before he transgressed in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah.

For further commendation of Jehoshaphat, it is added, that he sought not unto Baalim (that is, to any idol) : but sought to the Lord God of his fathers, walking in his

* 2 Chron. xvi.

† 2 Chron. xvii.

commandments, and not after the doings of Israel, who had both revolted from the government, and separated from the worship which God had set up.

And because Jehoshaphat did thus cleave unto the Lord, the Lord established the kingdom in his hand, and all Judah brought him presents: so that he had riches and honour in abundance. And his heart being enlarged, and he encouraged in the way of the Lord, he went on with more fervent zeal in the work of God: and not only took out of the land the remnant of the sodomites, which remained in the days of his father Asa, * 1 Kings xxii. 46. but took away also the high-places and groves out of Judah, 2 Chron. xvii. 6. which latter yet must be understood with some qualification or allowance: for it is said expressly, both in 2 Chron. xx. 33. and 1 Kings xxii. 43. that the high-places were not taken away. It might therefore be, that they were taken away in part, not wholly; in some places, not everywhere. As we read of king Asa (this Jehoshaphat's father) that he took away the sodomites out of the land, 1 Kings xv. 12. and yet it seems there was a remnant of them in the days of Asa, which Jehoshaphat his son did afterwards root out, 1 Kings xxii. 46.

In the third year of his reign, Jehoshaphat sent to divers of his princes, directing them to take with them certain Levites and priests (whose names are recorded, 2 Chron. xvii. 7, 8.) and go teach in the cities of Judah. These taking with them the book of the law, went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people. And that they might not be interrupted in so good a work, the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah; so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat. Nay, some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and tribute-silver: and the Arabians brought him flocks, which were tokens of homage.

Jehoshaphat thus growing exceeding great, he built in Judah castles and cities of store. And as he had much business in the cities of Judah, so he had a great army at Jerusalem, and his men of war were mighty men of valour. Of these he had one million, one hundred and threescore thousand always in arms, and ready at his command, besides those that lay in garrison in the fenced cities, throughout all Judah.

* 1 Kings xx.

While thus Jehoshaphat was ordering the affairs of his kingdom of Judah, * Ahab king of Israel received an haughty message from Benhadad king of Syria, who having gathered all his host together, and having two-and-thirty kings with him, with horses and chariots, went up and besieged Samaria; and from his camp sent heralds into the city to king Ahab, who were commanded to say unto him, Thus saith Benhadad, 'Thy silver and thy gold is mine, thy wives also, and thy children, even the goodliest are mine.' To which bold demand, timorous Ahab returned this humble answer; 'My Lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have.'

The Syrian king, by this submission grown more arrogant, sent his heralds again, giving them in charge to say to Ahab, Thus saith Benhadad, 'Although I have sent thee word, that thou shouldest deliver me thy silver and thy gold, with thy wives and thy children; yet to-morrow, about this time, I will send my servants unto thee, and they shall search thine house, and the houses of thy servants, and shall take away whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes.'

This startled Ahab, finding the Syrian king thus grow upon him: not knowing where it would stop, if he should suffer his enemies to enter the city under this pretence. Wherefore calling to him the elders of the land, he said to them, 'Mark, I pray you, and see how this man seeketh mischief: for when he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, for my silver and my gold, I denied him not, and yet he is not satisfied.' When the elders and the people heard this, they advised him not to hearken to him, nor to consent to his demand. Whereupon he bid the heralds of Benhadad tell their king, 'All that thou didst send for at the first, I will do, but this thing I may not do.' And with this answer he dismissed them.

But when Benhadad heard this answer, he in great fury sent to him again with this insulting threat, 'The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls, for all the people that follow me.'

To this proud boast, Ahab grown now a little more hardy and resolved, returned him only this proverbial saying, 'Let not him that girdeth on his armour, boast himself as he

* A. M. 3104.

‘that putteth it off.’ This nipping answer so nettled the proud Syrian (who, with his associate kings, was drinking in their pavilions) that immediately he gave order to his servants to plant their batteries against the city, which they did.

Mean while the Lord, moved with compassion towards Israel, and highly provoked by the proud insults of the Syrian king, sent a prophet to Ahab, king of Israel, with this message; ‘Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.’

Ahab, though an enemy to God, and no friend to his prophets, being now in a great strait, was glad to ask, and willing to take counsel. Wherefore, when the prophet had told him that the Lord would deliver this great multitude into his hand, he presently asked, ‘By whom?’ and the prophet, in the name of the Lord, answering, ‘By the young men (or servants) of the princes of the provinces;’ the king asked, who should order the battle: to which the prophet answering, Thou; he thereupon numbering the young men of the princes of the provinces, found them to be two hundred thirty and two. And after that, numbering also all the people of the children of Israel, that he had then with him in the city, he could make up but seven thousand of them.

The muster thus made, at noon the young men (servants to the princes of the provinces) sallied out of the city first, of which notice was quickly given to Benhadad (who, with his two and-thirty assistant kings, was still drinking in the pavilions). He, not thinking it worth his notice, gave order, that whether they came forth for peace, or for war, they should be taken alive. But he did not find it so easy a matter: for the young men, followed by the rest of the little army, gave so vigorous an onset, that every one of them slaying his man, they put the Syrians to flight. Whereupon the king of Israel pursuing them with all the small force he had, smote the horses and the chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter; Benhadad himself hardly escaping on horseback with the horsemen.

Then came the prophet to king Ahab again, and warned him to strengthen himself, and make good provision for his defence; for at the return of the year, said he, the king of Syria will come up against thee again. And so it proved.

For

For the servants of the king of Syria (to excuse themselves, and wipe of the stain of their so great defeat by so small a number) told him, 'The gods of the Israelites are gods of the hills; and we fighting them in the hill-country, they were too strong for us there. But let us fight against them in the plain (said they) and surely we shall be stronger than they.'

Wherefore they advised their king to take this course, viz. to set aside the two-and-thirty kings, and put so many captains in their rooms; and to raise an army, like for numbers to that he had lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot, and choose his ground to fight on in the plain; and then they were confident they should be stronger than the Israelites.

Pursuant to this counsel, at the return of the year, Benhadad, having numbered the Syrians, went up to Aphek (a city belonging to the tribe of Asher, Josh. xix. 30. but possessed by the Syrians) to fight against Israel. And the Israelites, being also numbered, and furnished with provisions, went out against them, and pitched before them in two battalions, like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country.

While thus the two armies stood facing one another, there came a man of God, and said to the king of Israel, Thus saith the Lord, 'Because the Syrians have said, the Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the vallies: therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hands, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.'

When now the armies stood waiting for the signal seven days, * Ahab, encouraged by this message from the Lord, joined the battle: and that handful (as it were) of men of the children of Israel, slew of the Syrians an hundred thousand footmen in one day. The rest fled to Aphek, and got into the city for safety; but a wall there fell upon seven-and-twenty thousand of the men that were left.

As for king Benhadad himself, he fled among the rest to Aphek, and getting into the city hid himself in an inner chamber. And there his servants coming to him told him, they had heard that the kings of the house of Israel were merciful kings: wherefore they desired him to give leave that they, putting sackcloth on their loins, and ropes about

their necks, might go out to the king of Israel; peradventure, said they, he will save thy life.

Their king consenting, they, putting on their sackcloth and halters, went to the king of Israel, and said unto him, 'Thy servant Benhadad saith, I pray thee let me live.' Ahab, who knew not but he had been slain in the battle, kindly answered, Is he yet alive? He is my brother.'

Now the men, did diligently observe whether any favourable word would drop from him; and hearing the word [brother] they did hastily catch it: wherefore repeating their petition, they said, 'Thy brother Benhadad, &c.' Whereupon Ahab bid them go, and bring him to him; which they having done, Ahab took him up into the chariot to him. Benhadad being thus on a sudden, and unexpectedly, received into favour; to shew his thankfulness, said to Ahab, as they rode together, 'The cities which my father took from thy father (or predecessor rather, viz. Baasha, chap. xv. 20.) I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria.' So Ahab, liking these conditions, made a covenant with Benhadad, and setting him at liberty, sent him away.

Hereupon the Lord sent a prophet to reprove Ahab for having dismissed the Syrian king, whom he had delivered into his hand. And the prophet, intending to catch Ahab by a parabolical speech (as Nathan once did David, 2 Sam. xii.) and make him pass sentence on himself, that he might assimilate himself to the person he intended to represent (which was a wounded soldier) said unto his neighbour, in the word of the Lord, 'Smite me, I pray thee:' but the man (perhaps not understanding his purpose) refused to smite him. Whereupon the prophet said unto him, 'Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the Lord, as soon as thou art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee;' and so it proved; for as soon as he was departed from the prophet, a lion found him, and slew him. Then said the prophet to another man whom he found, 'Smite me, I pray thee:' and that man smote him so, that in smiting he wounded him.

The prophet, thus accommodated to his purpose, waited for king Ahab by the way, having disguised himself with ashes upon his face. And as the king passed by, he cried unto him, saying, 'Thy servant went out into the midst
of

‘ of the battle, and behold, a man turned aside, and brought
 ‘ a man to me, and said, Keep this man; if by any means
 ‘ he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else
 ‘ thou shalt pay a talent of silver. And as thy servant was
 ‘ busy here and there he was gone.’ Then said the king
 of Israel to him, ‘ So shall thy judgment be, thyself hast
 ‘ decided it.’

The prophet thereupon hastily taking away the ashes from his face, the king of Israel discerned that he was of the prophets. Then said the prophet to him, Thus saith the Lord, ‘ Because thou hast let go out of thine hand a man
 ‘ whom I appointed to utter destruction; therefore thy life
 ‘ shall go for his life, and thy people for his people.’ Which doom when the king of Israel had heard, he went to his house in Samaria, not penitently sorry, but heavy and displeased, or rather stubborn, and in a rage.

Some time (but probably not long) after this, it came to pass, * that Ahab cast his eye upon a vineyard in Jezreel, which lay hard by a palace of his there: and having a mind to it, he said to Naboth the Jezreelite, to whom the vineyard belonged, ‘ Give me thy vineyard, that I may
 ‘ have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto
 ‘ my house, and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than
 ‘ it; or if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth
 ‘ of it in money.’

The proposal seemed fair, had it not been contrary to the law of God, which Ahab too little regarded. But Naboth being a conscientious man, and zealous of the law of God, which forbade the children of Israel to sell their inheritances, Levit. xxv. 23. and Numb. xxxvi. 7. &c. returned this answer to Ahab, ‘ The Lord forbid that I should give
 ‘ the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.’

Ahab hereupon going into his house heavy and displeased (because Naboth would not part with the inheritance of his fathers) laid himself down upon his bed in a sullen fit, and turning away his face from the company, would not eat. Which Jezebel his wife observing, she came to him, and asking him why his spirit was so sad that he would not eat; he told her the whole matter that had passed between Naboth and him. Whereupon (after she had, by way of exprobatation, asked him, ‘ Dost thou now govern the king-

* 1 Kings xxi. A. M. 3106.

‘dom of Israel?’ As much as to say, Art thou fit to be a king, and dost not understand the power of a king?) to cheer him up again, she wished him to rise and eat, and let his heart be merry; assuring him she would give him Naboth’s vineyard.

Then writing letters in Ahab’s name, and sealing them with his seal, she sent them unto the elders and nobles that dwelt in the same city where Naboth dwelt, and in the letters she wrote thus: ‘Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people; and set two men, sons of Belial (knights of the post) before him, to bear witness against him, that he did blaspheme God and the king. Then carry him out, and stone him to death.’ Here we may observe, that this wicked woman, though herself an idolatrous heathen, could make the law of God (which commanded that blasphemers should be stoned, Levit. xxiv. 16) a pretence whereby to shed the blood of this innocent man.

Upon receipt of these letters, the elders and nobles of Israel, pursuant to the direction Jezebel had therein given them, which they supposed to have come from the king, proclaimed a fast (which, among them, was the usual preparation to judicial trials: but this was such a fast as the prophet Isaiah not long after complained of; a fast to smite with the fist of wickedness, Isa. lviii. 4.) and having set Naboth on high amongst the people (that he might be seen of all the assembly) the two false witnesses came in, and sitting before him, charged him, in the presence of the people, that he had blasphemed God and the king. Whereupon they carried him out of the city, and having stoned him to death, sent Jezebel word that Naboth was stoned and dead. Nor did they shed his blood only, but the blood of his sons too (that there might be none to claim) as may be gathered from 2 Kings ix. 26.

When Jezebel had received this account, she hastened to her husband king Ahab, and said, ‘Arise, arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to let thee have for thy money: for Naboth is now dead.’ Whereupon Ahab went down to take possession of Naboth’s vineyard, as forfeited to him by Naboth’s pretended treason.

But while he was there, the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ‘Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he

‘ he is gone down to possess it. And thou shalt say unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? Wherefore in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.’

By that time the prophet had delivered thus much of his message, Ahab, interrupting him, said, ‘ Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?’ Yes, answered the prophet, I have found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord. Then going on with his message in the name of the Lord, he added;

‘ Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity: and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel. And I will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha, the son of Ahijah (both which families were utterly cut off) for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, in making Israel to sin. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city, the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field, shall the fowls of the air eat.’

No wonder is it that the Lord denounced so severe a sentence upon Ahab; for there was none like unto him, who did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord; doing very abominably in following idols (called, in contempt, dungy gods) to which Jezebel his wife stirred him up. Wherefore Jezebel went not without her just doom; for of her also the Lord said, ‘ The dogs shall eat Jezebel, by the wall or ditch of Jezreel.’

Yet as bad as Ahab was, when he heard this fearful judgment denounced by the prophet against him, being struck with a sudden terror, he shewed all the outward signs of repentance. For he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly, like a mourner, or one in affliction. Nor was this short shew of repentance wholly rejected; but the Lord took notice of it, and said to the prophet Elijah, ‘ Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son’s days I will bring the evil upon his house.’ Thus as Ahab humbled himself for a short time (which the sequel shewed); so God respited his punishment for a short time also.

It

It is not improbable that this temporary shew of humiliation in Ahab might be an inducement to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, * to make a league with him; for presently after this we read, that Jehoshaphat joined in affinity with Ahab, taking Ahab's daughter to be wife to his son and heir Jehoram, 2 Chron. xxi. 6. and 2 Kings viii. 18.

This unhappy league drew him, not long after, to Samaria, to visit Ahab; who, killing sheep and oxen in abundance, made a royal entertainment for him, and the people that came with him.

Ahab, willing to improve this opportunity to his own advantage, invited Jehoshaphat to go with him to battle to Ramoth-Gilead (a city of right belonging to Israel) to recover it from the Syrians. To which Jehoshaphat overhastily and unwarily consented, saying, 'I am as thou art, and my people are as thy people, and we will be with thee in the war.' Yet quickly recollecting himself, he desired king Ahab to inquire at the Word of the Lord that they might know whether the Lord did approve their undertaking.

Ahab thereupon summoned his prophets together, who were four hundred men (probably those called the prophets of the groves, who usually fed at queen Jezebel's table, and escaped the brunt at Carmel, 1 Kings xviii.) and putting the question to them, 'Shall I go to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?' They unanimously answered, 'Go up, for the Lord hath delivered it into the hand of the king.'

But, said Jehoshaphat, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire by him? Yes, said Ahab, there is one man (but one true prophet, alas! to four hundred false ones) and that is Micaiah, the son of Imlah; but I hate him, for he never prophesieth good concerning me, but evil. Nay, replied Jehoshaphat, 'Let not the king say so.' That is, let him not hate the prophet for his message-fake; nor yet reject the message, because it doth not please him. Then the king of Israel, calling for one of his officers, bid him make haste, and fetch Micaiah to him.

Mean while, the two kings of Israel and of Judah, sitting either of them on his throne, clothed in their royal robes, in a plain place at the entering in of the gate of Samaria; all the prophets prophesied before them, and with one accord said, 'Go up to Ramoth-Gilead, and prosper; for the

* 1 Kings xxii.

2 Chron. xviii.

† Lord.

‘ Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.’ And one of them (whose name was Zedekiah, the son of Che-naanah) the better to impress their notions upon the king’s minds, made him horns of iron, and said, Thus saith the Lord, ‘ With these thou shalt push Syria until thou consume them.’

While thus the false prophets were playing their pranks to deceive the two kings, the officer that went to fetch Micaiah, willing either to further the enterprize, or to prevent sufferings to the prophet, told him how unanimously all the king’s prophets had prophesied good success to him in this expedition, and desired him to speak as they had done. But good Micaiah gave him this short answer, ‘ As the Lord liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak.’

Being now come before the two kings, Ahab said to him, ‘ Micaiah, Shall we go to Ramoth-Gilead to battle? Or shall we forbear?’ He, at the first, in contempt of the false prophets, and the better to expose them, said, as they had done, ‘ Go ye up, and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand.’ But he spake it in such a manner, that king Ahab easily perceived he derided them. Therefore he said to him, ‘ How many times shall I adjure thee, that thou say nothing but the truth to me in the name of the Lord?’ Nay, replied Micaiah, if thou wilt hear the truth, then mind what I say, ‘ I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep without a shepherd; and the Lord said, These have no master, let them therefore return every man to his house in peace.’

This was a plain and apt simile, setting forth the death of Ahab, and the defeat of his people, if they proceeded to this battle. And Ahab, it seems, understood it so; for interrupting the prophet here, he said to Jehoshaphat, ‘ Did I not tell thee that he would not prophesy good unto me, but evil? But the prophet, not daunted with Ahab’s interruption, proceeded, saying,

‘ Therefore hear the word of the Lord. I saw the Lord sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on either hand of him. And the Lord said, who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? And one spake after one manner, and another after another manner.’ (Thus the prophet, the more sensibly to affect the hearers, represented the heavenly vision, after the manner of human consultations). ‘ Then
(said

‘ (said he) came out a spirit, and standing before the Lord, said, I will entice him. And the Lord asked him, wherewith, or by what means, he would entice him? I will go out (said he) and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets (for all Ahab’s prophets spake the same thing, in the same words, as if they had but one mouth.) Then said the Lord, Go out and do so; for thou shalt entice him, and shalt also prevail.’ Now therefore (added Micaiah) ‘ Behold the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets; and the Lord hath spoken evil against thee.’

This ought not to seem strange, or be offensive to any, that the Lord should here be said to have put a lying spirit in the mouth of the false prophets; for it is his prerogative, a token of his absolute sovereignty, that he may use instruments of all sorts to effect his work by, whether for the advancing his own honour, the correction of his children, or the destruction of his enemies.

This saying of Micaiah’s [That the Lord had put a lying spirit into the mouth of these Jezebelan prophets] angered them extremely; insomuch that Zedekiah (he that made the iron horns, and who seems to have been a leading man amongst them) coming up to Micaiah, smote him on the cheek (for it is the false prophet commonly that uses the violence, not the true) and in derision said, ‘ Which way went the spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?’ That, replied Micaiah, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go from chamber to chamber to hide thyself.’

By this time Ahab had enough of Micaiah. Wherefore breaking off the discourse between Zedekiah and him, he commanded the officer to take Micaiah, and carry him back to Amon the governor, and to Joash the king’s son, and say unto them, Thus saith the king, ‘ Put this fellow (so in contempt he called the prophet) in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction, and with water of affliction (afflict him with want of fit and sufficient food) until I return in peace.’ Nay, said Micaiah, ‘ If thou return in peace, then hath not the Lord spoken by me:’ and he bid all the people take notice of it.

Though king Jehoshaphat heard all this, and knew Micaiah to be a prophet of the Lord; yet having linked himself in with wicked Ahab, both by affinity and league, he went up with him to fight against Ramoth Gilead. But before the battle was joined, Ahab (mindful probably of what

what Micaiah had said, and willing to frustrate the prophecy) proposed that he would disguise himself, and so go into the battle; but that Jehoshaphat should fight in his royal robes. And accordingly they did so.

Now Benhadad, the king of Syria, had commanded the captains of his chariots to single out the king of Israel, and not to fight with any other, small or great, but with him only. This was a very unkind return to Ahab for the great kindness he had shewed Benhadad in their former war; when, though Benhadad was then the aggressor, Ahab, to his own great damage, generously gave him both his life and liberty when he had him wholly in his mercy.

However, the Syrian captains observing their king's command, sought after the king of Israel; and when they saw Jehoshaphat, concluding him to be the king of Israel, they beset him round on every side, and made so vigorous an impression, that Jehoshaphat was fain to cry out; and the Lord having compassion on him, helped him at this great strait, by making them sensible that it was not the king of Israel, and thereupon inclining them to turn back from pursuing him.

Thus narrowly escaped Jehoshaphat. But Ahab's politick disguise did not secure him. For a certain man, drawing a bow at a venture, hit him between the joints of his armour, and gave him a mortal wound. Whereupon he said to his charioteer, 'Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host, for I am wounded.' Yet because the battle grew hotter upon the Israelites that day, the king of Israel was held up in his chariot till the evening; that his being so wounded might not be known to his soldiers to discourage them; and about the going down of the sun he died. Then was a retreat sounded, and proclamation made throughout the host of Israel, that every man should escape to his city, or to his country-dwelling. And herein was fulfilled the vision of Micaiah; for Israel was now scattered like sheep that had no shepherd nor master, their master Ahab being slain.

King Ahab was brought to Samaria, and buried there. And because, while he was held up in his chariot, the blood ran out of his wound, not only into his armour, but into his chariot also, therefore his chariot was washed in the

pool of Samaria, as well as his armour, and the dogs licked up his blood, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah the Tishbite.

Thus died this wicked king. For a further account of whose publick acts we are here referred (as we are often elsewhere on other occasions) to a book of Chronicles long since lost; * in which, amongst other things, mention it seems was made of an ivory house which king Ahab built.

And as Samaria was built by Omri his father; so in his days was Jericho rebuilt by Hiel the Bethlehite; who according to the word of the Lord, which above five hundred years before he spake by Joshua the son of Nun, Josh. vi. 26. laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, 1 Kings xvi. 34.

Although Jehoshaphat the king of Judah escaped without hurt in the battle, yet he escaped not without reproof from the Lord after the battle, for having joined himself in affinity and league with wicked Ahab. For as soon as he was come back to Jerusalem, Jehu, the son of Hanani the seer, went out to meet him with this greeting, 'Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from the Lord. Nevertheless (so he went on, that the good king might not be too much cast down) there are good things found in thee; inasmuch as thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.'

This gentle reproof had so good an effect upon Jehoshaphat, that after he had made some stay at Jerusalem, he took his progress through the people, from Beersheba to mount Ephraim (that is, from one end of his kingdom to the other) and brought them back unto the Lord God of their fathers. And having set judges in the land, he said unto them, 'Take heed what ye do, for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now, let the fear of the Lord be upon you, take heed and do it; for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.'

Moreover, in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the Lord (matters apper-

* 1 Kings xxii. 2 Chron. xix.

taining to his worship) and for controversies (or differences in civil matters) when they (the judges, he had set in the several cities) should have recourse to Jerusalem for advice or assistance. And to these he gave charge, saying, 'Thus shall ye do, in the fear of the Lord, faithfully and with a perfect heart. And what cause soever shall come to you, of your brethren that dwell in the cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the Lord, and so wrath come upon you and upon your brethren. This do, and ye shall not trespass'. Then directing them unto whom, upon all occasions, they should have recourse in all matters, relating as well to religion as to the civil estate, he concluded with this short exhortation and encouragement; 'Deal courageously, and the Lord will be with the good.'

The truth of this himself soon after experienced. For the children of Moab and Ammon, with their confederates, coming against him in battle, news was brought him on a sudden, that there came a great multitude against him from beyond the sea on this side Syria, and that they were in Engedi, not a great way off. This unexpected news put Jehoshaphat in great fear; and not having confidence in his own strength, he set himself to seek the Lord; and in order thereunto proclaimed a fast throughout all the kingdom of Judah. Whereupon Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord; even out of all the cities of Judah they came to Jerusalem to seek the Lord. And Jehoshaphat the king standing in the congregation of Judah, in the house of the Lord, * before the new court, thus addressed himself unto God:

'O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven, and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? Art not thou (more especially) our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever? and they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying, If when evil cometh upon us as a judgment (whether it be the sword, pestilence, or famine) we stand

* 2 Chron. xx.

‘ in thy presence before this house (in which thy name is called upon) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then hear thou and help. And now behold, the children of Ammon and Moab, and those of mount Seir (whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not;) behold, I say, how they reward us; for they are come up against us, to cast us out of thy possession which thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we (of ourselves) have no might against this great company that cometh up against us; neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee.’

Thus spake the king in the name of all the people. And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their wives and children, even their little ones.

Then upon Jehaziel (the vision of God) a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the Lord, in the midst of the congregation; and he said, ‘ Harken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, thus saith the Lord unto you; Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God’s. To-morrow go ye down against them; behold they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the valley, before the wilderness of Jeruel.’ Which particular descriptions of places he gave, that when the people should find it so, they might thereby be confirmed in the truth of his prophecy.

Then going on; ‘ But, said he, ye shall not need to fight in this battle. Set yourselves, and be still; and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem. To-morrow, I say, go out against them, and fear not, nor be dismayed; for the Lord will be with you.’

Upon this gracious answer from the Lord, king Jehoshaphat bowed his head, with his face towards the ground: and all Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, falling down before the Lord, worshipped him; and certain of the Levites stood up, and praised the Lord God of Israel with a loud voice on high.

Early next morning they marched out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And as they went forth, Jehoshaphat, standing in the way, said, ‘ Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.’

‘prosper.’ Then, having consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and such as should praise God, under the title of the Beauty of Holiness, as they went out before the army; and should say, ‘Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever.’

Though this was a sort of triumphing, before the victory, yet it was well grounded; the Lord by his prophet having given them his word for it; nor was it long before he made it good. For as they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against their enemies from amongst themselves, so that they smote one another. For the children of Ammon and of Moab fell upon the inhabitants of mount Seir, to slay and utterly destroy them; and when they had made an end of them, they set themselves to destroy one another. So that when Jehoshaphat with his army came towards the watch tower in the wilderness, and looked for the great armies of the enemies, behold, they were dead bodies, fallen to the earth, and none of them left alive. This was so evidently the Lord’s doing, that it may well be called one of the battles of the Lord; and might justly claim a place in that book of the wars of the Lord, which is mentioned in Numb xxi. 14.

Thus Jehoshaphat and his people, instead of fighting, came to take the spoil of their enemies, which they found amongst them in abundance, both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away. For they were three days in gathering the spoil, it was so much.

On the fourth day they assembled themselves together in the valley. And that they might not be wanting of a thankful acknowledgment to the Lord for so great a deliverance, they there solemnly blessed the Lord. From which act, the name of that place was afterwards called the valley of Berachah, that is, of blessing.

Then setting forward in good order, with Jehoshaphat their king at the head of them, they returned to Jerusalem with joy, playing on psalteries and harps, and sounding their trumpets until they came to the house of the Lord; because the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemies.

The destruction of this invading army was so evidently seen to be the act of God, that it struck terror into the rest of the nations; and that the fear of God was on the kingdoms round about, when they heard that the Lord fought

against the enemies of Israel; so that the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest on every side.

Yet after all this (see the instability of man) Jehoshaphat joined himself with Ahaziah king of Israel (son to wicked Ahab) who succeeded his father in his vices as well as in his kingdom, and did wickedly, as he had done, walking in the way of his father Ahab, and of Jezebel his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin: for he served Baal and worshipped him, and thereby provoked to anger the Lord God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.

The design of this league between Jehoshaphat and him, was to send a fleet jointly between them, to fetch gold from Ophir (an eastern country, which yielded the finest gold:) and in order thereunto they built the ships in Ezion-Geber, which signifies the Counsel of Man; but the undertaking being out of the counsel of God, the Lord disappointed the enterprize by breaking the ships in the harbour. Which done, Eliezer (which signifies the Help of God) son of Dodarah (which signifies Love) prophesied against Jehoshaphat, and told him, because he had joined himself with Ahaziah, the Lord had broken his works. And so indeed he had; for the ships were so broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

This was the second time that this good king Jehoshaphat had tripped in this kind. The first had like to have cost him his life, when he joined with wicked Ahab; a king too, as well as he; yea, and a king of Israel, but a wicked one. This second did cost him the loss of his fleet, for joining with Ahab's wicked son. And this may stand as a way-mark, for a warning to all, both princes and private persons who profess to serve and worship the true God, not to join themselves with God's enemies.

THE
SECOND BOOK
OF THE
KINGS;

INCLUDING THE REST (FROM THE TWENTIETH
CHAPTER) OF THE SECOND BOOK OF THE

CHRONICLES;

And containing an History of 320 years, to the captivity of Zedekiah, the last King of Judah, the destruction of the Temple and City of Jerusalem by Nébuchadnezzar, and the proclamation of Cyrus for rebuilding the Temple. Within the compass of which period, most of the Prophets, whose Writings are extant, viz.

JONAH,	MICAH,	EZEKIEL,
AMOS,	JEREMIAH,	OBADIAH,
HOSEA,	ZEPHANIAH,	and
JOEL,	HABAKKUK,	
ISAIAH,	NAHUM,	DANIEL

Prophefied, and probably in order of time as they are here set; whose several Books are more or less taken notice of in the course of the History, as they afford more or less matter relating thereunto.

IT was in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, that Ahaziah son of Ahab began to reign over Israel, 1 Kings xxii. 51. And in the second year of his reign he received an hurt by a fall * which he had through a lattice or grate in his upper chamber in Samariâ; which being

* 2 Kings i.

made to give light to the lower rooms, he, it seems, dropped through it. Whereupon he sent messengers to inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron (the same that in the New Testament is called the prince of the devils, Luke xi. 15.) whether he should recover of that hurt or not.

This was strange. We read in 2 Kings viii. 8. that when Benhadad king of Syria, a professed heathen, was sick, he sent to Elisha, the prophet of the God of Israel, to inquire if he should recover of that disease. But here a king of Israel sends, on a like occasion, to inquire of an heathen god.

This so provoked the God of Israel, that sending an angel to Elijah the Tishbite, he commanded him to go meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say thus unto them, 'Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron? (that is, doth not your going to inquire of the god of Ekron plainly speak, that you do not believe there is a God in Israel)? Now therefore, thus saith the Lord, Thou (king Ahaziah, who hast sent these messengers to inquire of an heathen god, thou) shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up to lie, but shalt surely die.'

Upon this the messengers, not thinking it needful to go to Ekron, returned to Samaria; and coming to the king sooner than expected, he asked why they were come back: They told him there came a man up to meet them, and bid them turn back again unto the king that sent them, and say unto him, 'Thus saith the Lord, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron? Therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.'

It seems the messengers did not know the prophet; for the king asked them what manner of man it was that met them, and told them these words. And when they told him that he was an hairy man (which is understood to be spoken not of his person, but his garment, which was rough, coarse, and hairy) and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins; he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite. For it is probable he might have formerly seen him when he denounced judgment against his father Ahab.

Elijah, having delivered his message, was gone, and had sat him down on the top of an hill*. Thither the king sent

* A. M. 3109.

unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty men; that if he refused to come with him by fair means, they might bring him by force.

The captain, as soon as he came to him, like a rough and resolute soldier, said, 'Thou man of God, the king hath said, 'come down.' This was not such language as the man of God used to receive from such as professed to be the people of God. The prophet therefore answered him as short and as sharp. 'If (said he) I be a man of God, then let fire 'come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty.' Immediately came fire down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty men.

The king being acquainted with this, sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. Who (nothing daunted at the divine execution done upon the former captain and his men) coming boldly up to Elijah, said, 'O man of God, 'Thus hath the king said, Come down quickly.' The prophet, answering him as he had done the former, said, 'If I 'be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and 'consume thee and thy fifty.' Whereupon the fire of God, coming down from heaven, forthwith consumed him and his fifty.

This was hot work. And though it may seem an hard case, that men under command should suffer so severely for executing the commands of their superiors, yet all subordinate ministers may hence learn, how dangerous a thing it is to persecute a servant of God, though required by the highest of human powers.

The hardened king, notwithstanding this, sent again a captain of a third fifty with his fifty. But this captain, having bought wisdom at the cost of the two former, and being grown wary by the mischief they had suffered; when he came to Elijah, fell on his knees before him (bowing to that divine power, which he saw had broken forth in wrath upon the others, and which he knew was alike able to destroy him and his men also) and, instead of commanding, besought him, saying, 'O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life 'of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight. Be- 'hold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the 'two captains of the former fifties with their fifties; where- 'fore let my life now be precious in thy sight.'

This was regardful and moving language; and upon this, the angel of the Lord said to Elijah, 'Go down with him, 'be

‘ be not afraid of him’ (the king). Elijah thereupon went down with the captain; and being brought before the king, said unto him, ‘ Thus saith the Lord, forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron (as if there were no God in Israel to inquire of) therefore thou shalt not come down from off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.’ This was quickly made good; for Ahaziah did not recover of his hurt, but died soon after, according to the word of the Lord, which Elijah had spoken. And Jehoram, his brother (for he had no son) reigned in his stead.

The time now drawing near, wherein the Lord had determined to take up his servant Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, * Elijah went from Gilgal, taking with him Elisha, whom God had before appointed, 1 Kings xix. 16 to succeed him in his prophetic office. And as they went by the way, Elijah said unto Elisha, ‘ Tarry here, I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel.’ But Elisha answered him, ‘ As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee:’ so they went down to Bethel together.

Being come thither, the sons of the prophets that were there, having a prophetick sense that Elijah’s departure was at hand, came to Elisha, and said unto him, ‘ Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day? Yes, said Elisha, I know it, hold you your peace.’

At Bethel, Elijah said again to Elisha, ‘ Tarry here I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho.’ But Elisha answered him as before, assuring him that he would not leave him; so they went on together to Jericho. And there also the sons of the prophets asked Elisha, as the others had done at Bethel, ‘ If he knew that the Lord would take his master from him that day.’ To whom again in like manner he answered, ‘ Yes, I know it;’ and bid them also hold their peace.

Here again Elijah said to Elisha, ‘ Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan.’ But Elisha, as before, resolutely answering that he would not leave him, they went on together.

Though Elijah seemed willing to have shaken off Elisha in this journey, telling him, the Lord had sent him to this, that, and the other place; yet the distance of the places one from

the other, and the total silence of any business he did, or had to do at Bethel, or at Jericho, make way for a reasonable conjecture, that Elijah, knowing Elisha was to succeed him, took these journeys to prove the love, faith, zeal, and constancy of Elisha.

When they were come down to Jordan, and they two only stood by the river's side, Elijah took his mantle (or cloke, which he usually wore) and wrapping it together, smote the waters therewith; which thereupon divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

Having thus miraculously crossed Jordan (the river of judgment) Elijah said to Elisha, 'Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee.' Whereupon Elisha said, 'I pray thee let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.' Wherein he is thought to have alluded to the law for inheritances among the Jews, Deut. xxi. 17. by which he who, in right of primogeniture, succeeded to the father in the government of the family, enjoyed a double part or portion of the estate or goods; that is, twice as much as any other of the family had. And therefore since God had been pleased to adopt him to be Elijah's successor in the prophetick ministry, he craved the privilege of primogeniture, a double portion of that spirit which Elijah had been endued with.

Elijah told him, he had asked an hard thing. But yet (added he) 'It shall be granted thee, if thou see'st me when I am taken from thee; otherwise not.' Implying, that there must be a spiritual vigilancy or watchfulness in him that expects to receive a spiritual blessing.

Thus they walking on, and talking, on a sudden there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them asunder, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

Elisha saw it; and that Elijah might know he saw it, he cried out, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!' After which, seeing him no more, he took hold of his own clothes, and to express his sorrow, rent them in two pieces.

Then taking up the mantle of Elijah, which, as he ascended, fell from him; he went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan. And with the mantle that fell from Elijah, smiting the waters as Elijah had done, he said, 'Where is the
' God

‘God of Elijah?’ Upon which the waters parted hither and thither, so that he also went over on dry ground.

This being observed by some of the sons of the prophets (who, following them out of Jericho, stood at a distance to see what would be done) they said one to another, ‘The spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha.’ And thereupon going to meet him, they bowed themselves to the ground before him, acknowledging him to have the chief place among them, as Elijah had before him.

These being over-solicitous about Elijah’s body, and surmising that peradventure the Spirit of the Lord having taken him up, might have cast him upon some mountain, or in some valley, desired leave of Elisha, that they might send out fifty men of their company to seek him: but Elisha plainly forbade them. Yet they importunately pressing him, he at length, against his mind, yielded to them. Whereupon the fifty men went out, and having sought him three days to no purpose, returned to Jericho, where they found Elisha, and by him were blamed for their over-officiousness.

While Elisha tarried at Jericho, the men of the city came to him, and told him, that though the situation of the city was pleasant, as he himself might observe; yet the water was naught, and the ground barren. He thereupon bid them bring him a new cruse (or vial) and put some salt therein; which when they had done, he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and having cast in the salt there, he said, ‘Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more unwholesomeness or barrenness.’ So the waters were healed from thenceforward, according to the saying of Elisha.

From thence he went unto Bethel* (which had been, and for aught appears then was, the chief seat of idolatry in Israel, where Jeroboam had set up one of his idol calves, 1 Kings xii. 28, 29). And as he was going up by the way, a company of little children coming out of the city, mocked him, saying, ‘Go up thou bald head, go up thou bald head.’ He turning back, and looking on them, cursed them in the name of the Lord. Whereupon there came forth two she-bears out of an adjacent wood, and tore two-and-forty of the children.

Unlikely it is that so severe a judgment would have been inflicted on these little children, had their mocking Elisha

* A. M. 3097.

proceeded only from childish folly. It is therefore reasonable to conclude, that the prophet was sensible these children had been encouraged by their idolatrous parents, or others of that place, to deride and mock him as a prophet of the Lord, who was zealous against their idolatry: and the indignity offered to him, in his prophetic capacity, reflecting on the Lord who sent him, was therefore the more exemplarily punished, that others might fear, and learn to beware.

From Bethel the prophet, returning by mount Carmel to Samaria, found fresh service there, which was thus occasioned:

The Moabites had been tributaries to Israel ever since David conquered them, 2 Sam. viii. 2. and continued so till Ahab's death. After which, in his son Ahaziah's reign, they rebelled, 2 Kings i. 1. and Ahaziah, having but a short reign, and receiving that hurt by his fall which hastened his death, had not reduced them. The tribute which the Moabites used to pay the kings of Israel, was an hundred thousand lambs, an hundred thousand rams, with the wool. This having been withheld and denied ever since Ahab's death, Jehoram, a younger son of Ahab, succeeding his brother Ahaziah in the kingdom of Israel, resolved to reduce Moab to their former subjection by arms. And in order thereunto, he not only mustered all Israel to the war, but sent to Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, to invite him to go with him to battle against Moab.

Jehoshaphat, though he had smarted twice before for the same thing, too easily yielded to join forces, and go with Jehoram*. And having consulted together which way they should go up, and concluded to go through the wilderness of Edom, they took the king of Edom also with them; who, though called a king, was indeed but a vice-roy, lieutenant, or deputy-king to Jehoshaphat, 1 Kings xxii. 47. For Edom had been tributary to Judah, ever since king David subdued them, 2 Sam. viii. 14. and yet for a while continued so.

Then setting forward, these three kings fetched a compass of seven days journey†, that they might come with the greater advantage upon the backs of their enemies; and thereby they ran themselves and their armies into very great straits and dangers. For there was no water in that wilderness to suffice the host, and the cattle that followed them through so long a

* 2 Kings iii

† A. M. 3109.

march. This put them to a stand. And the king of Israel, conscious of his own evil ways whereby he had provoked the Lord, cried out, Alas! the Lord hath delivered these three kings into the hand of Moab.

But Jehoshaphat (who was a good man, though too easily drawn into bad company) having his eye to God for help, asked 'Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may inquire of the Lord by him?' Yes, said one of the king of Israel's servants, here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, who poured water on the hands of Elijah (that is, waited on him as his servant). Jehoshaphat replying, 'The word of the Lord is with him;' the three kings went down together to him.

But when Elisha saw the king of Israel coming, 'What (said he) have I to do with thee? Get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother (the prophets of Baal, and of the groves).' Nay, said the king of Israel, 'It is not for me only that we come to inquire: but the Lord hath called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab. As the Lord of hosts liveth, replied Elisha, before whom I stand, assuredly, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look towards thee, nor see thee.'

The reason of this great aversion in the prophet from the king of Israel, was, that though he was not quite so bad as his father and his mother (for he had put away the image of Baal which his father had made); yet he wrought evil in the sight of the Lord, and did cleave unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin (the calves, and the separate altar) he departed not therefrom.

Yet, for the sake of good Jehoshaphat, the prophet called for a minstrel (one that could play well on an instrument of musick, or sing divine psalms, often used in those times, both to cheer the spirit of the prophets, and compose the minds of the hearers to a due attention). And while the minstrel played, the hand of the Lord (that is, his power, and therein the gift of prophecy) came upon the prophet, and he said, 'Thus saith the Lord, make this valley full of ditches: for thus saith the Lord, ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye and your cattle, and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord; for he will deliver the Moabites also (whom ye go to fight against) into

‘ into your hand, and ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all the wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones ;’ that is, ye shall spare nothing, but quite destroy the country.

This prediction was soon fulfilled ; for next morning, at the time when the meat offering was offered, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.

Mean while the Moabites, having got notice that these kings were coming up to fight against them, had mustered all their forces ; and having listed all that were able to bear arms, stood ready to receive them on the frontier of the kingdom. But when early in the morning they saw the sun shine upon the waters, in a place where they knew there never used to be any water, they thought it was blood, and the rather, for that the water (God so disposing it) appeared to them as red as blood. Concluding therefore that the kings were slain, and that the adverse armies had smitten one another, they cried, ‘ Moab, to the spoil ;’ and made what haste they could to it.

But when they came to the camp of Israel, they soon (yet too late) found their mistake : for the Israelites sallying out upon them, smote the Moabites, and put them to flight, and pursuing them into their own country, slew them there : and beating down their cities, made great devastation in the country, spoiling the land, by casting every man his stone upon every good piece of ground they came to ; stopping up also the wells of water, and felling every goodly tree, till they came to Kirharaseth. This probably was a remarkable city, for beauty or for strength, or both, for the name imports a ‘ wall of workmanship.’

Into this city, it seems, the king of Moab (whose name was Mesha) had fled for safety, with such of his scattered forces as in this general rout he could rally ; and here the confederate armies besieged him. The defence he made, secured his place from being razed, as others were. So that, though it were in a sort bombed, the slingers surrounding it and shaking it, yet the well-wrought wall stood.

But the king of Moab, hopeless to maintain the place against so great a force, taking with him seven hundred men that drew swords, made a desperate sally, intending to break

through on that side where the king of Edom lay. But finding too strong a resistance, he was forced to retreat, and shut himself up in the city again.

Then filled with indignation against Israel, and to let them see that he was resolved never to yield the place, but that he, and every man of his*, would die upon the spot first, he took his eldest son, who was to have reigned after him, and offered him for a burnt-offering upon the wall; that having thereby, as he supposed, pacified his offended gods, he might succeed the better in the war afterwards. Some think (among whom are Tremellius and Junius, in their annotation on Amos i. 16. in them, but chap. ii. 1. in the English) that it was not his own son that the king of Moab thus sacrificed, but the son and heir of the king of Edom, whom he had taken in the late sally; but it seems more probable that it was his own son; and that mentioned in Amos, of his burning the bones of the king of Edom into lime, related to some other fact and time. But which soever it was, the sight of so barbarous a cruelty had such a compassionate effect on the hearts of the confederate armies, that forthwith raising the siege, they returned to their own countries. Where leaving them for a while to rest and refresh themselves, let us, as the course of the history leads, take notice of some more very remarkable miracles wrought by the prophet Elisha, whether in the same order of time wherein they are related or not.

Elisha being returned to Samaria, there came unto him a certain woman†, who was a widow to one of the sons of the prophets, and thus bespake him: ‘Thy servant my husband is dead; and though he died in debt, yet thou knowest he was one that feared the Lord (and so did not run into debt through ill-husbandry or evil courses). And not having left wherewith to pay, the creditors come to take my two sons to be bondmen.’

Elisha commiserating the poor woman’s condition, asked her what he should do for her; and bid her tell him what she had in the house. Truly nothing, said she, save a pot of oil. Then said he, ‘Go, borrow thee good store of empty vessels of all thy neighbours; and when thou hast brought them home, shut the door upon thyself and thy sons, and pour out thy oil into all those vessels, still setting them aside that are full.’

* 2 Kings iv. † A. M. 3109.

The woman following the prophet's direction, went and borrowed vessels, and shutting herself and her sons in, they brought her the empty vessels, and she poured out of her oil into them : and as long as the empty vessels held out, the oil increasing held out also ; but when calling for another vessel, her son told her they were all full, the oil staid. Then going to the man of God, and telling him what she had done, and what increase she had of the oil ; he bid her go sell the oil, and pay her debt, and then she and her children should live of the rest. A very good lesson for debtors to learn.

The next account we have of this great prophet is from Shunem (a town in the tribe of Issachar, Josh. xix. 18.) where dwelt a woman of great note ; whose husband being ancient, had left, it seems, the ordering of his family much to his wife. She observing Elisha to pass often that way, invited him to come in and eat with them, which he did ; and finding a kind reception from her husband and her, he afterwards, as oft as he passed by, turned in thither to refresh himself.

After some time, the woman having conversed with Elisha, and made her observations thereupon, told her husband, that she perceived this guest of theirs, who passed so often by them, was an holy man of God : and therefore she desired her husband, that they might make a little chamber upon the wall ; and set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick (furniture for use, not ostentation, answering his conveniency, not their grandeur) ; that so, whensoever he should come to them, he might take up his lodging there. The husband consenting to his wife's proposal, the chamber was forthwith fitted up ; and the next time Elisha came thither, he was directed into that chamber, and thenceforward took that for his lodging.

Pleased with these kind and plain accommodations, and having a grateful mind to requite his benefactors, Elisha, one time when he was in his lodging, bid his servant Gehazi speak to the Shunamite his landlady, and let her know he was sensible of her kindness in the care she had taken for him, and would gladly answer it in what he could ; and therefore he should ask her what might be done for her, and whether she would be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host in any case. Gehazi having delivered his master's message to her, she answered, ' I dwell among my own people : ' thereby intimating, that living lovingly with her neighbours,

she had no occasion to complain or seek redress for any thing.

Gehazi reporting this her answer to his master, Elisha said to him, what then is to be done for her? Why, said Gehazi, she hath no child, and her husband is old. The prophet apprehending his meaning, bid him call her; and when she was come, and stood before him, he, without any compliment or ceremonious introduction, said unto her, 'About this season, according to the course of life, thou shalt embrace a son.'

As this was quite beside her expectation, so it is likely it might exceed her belief; for the answer she gave him was, 'Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid' (that is, do not put me in a vain hope, and thereby deceive me). However, the woman after this in due time bare a son, according as Elisha had predicted.

When this child was grown up that he could run about, he went out one morning, in the harvest-time, to his father, who was with his reapers. There he had not been long ere he was taken with a fore pain in his head, which made him cry out, My head, my head. His father thereupon ordered a servant to carry him home to his mother; which the servant doing, he sat upon his mother's knees till noon, and then died. The afflicted mother, seeing her only child dead, carried him up into the chamber of the man of God; and having laid him on his bed, shut the door, and came out, and calling to her husband, desired him to send one of the young men, and one of the asses, that she might run to the man of God, and come again. He not understanding, or not duly considering the urgency of the occasion, asked her, why she would go that day, it being neither new moon nor sabbath (which were the usual days of going to inquire of the Lord in any case, or to perform any public exercise of religious worship). But she pressing to be gone, he sent her the servant and the ass; and she mounting, bid the servant drive on, and go forward, and not slack his pace, unless she should bid him.

The man of God was at Carmel, and happened to espy the woman afar off before she was come to him; and pointing to her, said to Gehazi his servant, 'Behold, yonder is that Shunamite; run therefore now, I pray thee, to meet her, and ask her, if it be well with her, with her husband, and with the child.'

Away ran Gehazi to her; but she, not willing to spend time in entertaining discourse with him, only answered, Well; and pressed on to the prophet himself.

As

As soon as she was got to him, she fell down, and caught him by the feet; which his servant Gehazi seeing, came near to thrust her away: but his master said, 'Let her alone, for her soul is vexed within her, and the Lord hath hid the cause of it from me.'

The woman by this time having a little recovered her spirits, said unto him, 'Did I desire a son of my lord? Did I not say, do not deceive me?'

Before she could bring forth any more, the prophet apprehending the matter, said to Gehazi, 'Gird up thy loins (that is, thy coat about thy loins, that it may not hinder thy running) and take my staff in thy hand, and go thy way. If thou meet any man, salute him not, and if any man salute thee, answer him not again (that is, make no delay, nor lose any time, by stopping to speak with any body on the way) and lay my staff upon the face of the child.'

This probably might have wrought the cure, had not the solicitous mother importunately pressed the prophet to go with her, telling him positively she would not go back without him: which resolution she bound with an asseveration, commonly used in those times, saying, 'As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.' Whereupon he arose and followed her.

Gehazi observing his master's direction, had made so much haste, that he had laid the staff on the face of the child; and finding thereupon no token or symptom of life, was coming back to his master; and meeting him on the way, told him in a pretty significant phrase, the child was not awaked.

Elisha thereupon entering the house, and finding the child lying dead upon his bed, shut the door upon them two, and prayed unto the Lord. Then getting up upon the bed, he lay upon the child; and putting his mouth upon the child's mouth, his eyes upon its eyes, and his hands upon its hands, he stretched himself upon the child (as his master Elijah had once done on a like occasion, 1 Kings xvii. 21.) and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then walking a turn or two about the chamber, he got up again, and having in like manner stretched himself again upon the child, the child sneezed seven times, and opened its eyes.

Elisha then bid his servant call the mother; and she upon the call quickly coming, he bid her take up her son. At which word the overjoyed mother falling down at the prophet's

phet's feet, and bowing herself to the ground, in reverence to that divine power, through which so great a miracle was wrought, and by which she had received so great a benefit, took up the child and departed.

The prophet also departed and went to Gilgal, where was at that time a dearth; and the sons (that is, the disciples or scholars*) of the prophets (who were many in number) sitting before him, he bid his servant set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for them. One of them thereupon going forth into the field, to gather herbs for the pottage, found a wild vine (so it is rendered, but is supposed to be the same which herbalists call *colloquintida*, which hath a strong purging quality): and of this having gathered his lapful, came and shred it into the pot of pottage, not knowing the nature of it. When the pottage was sod, they poured out for the men to eat. But as they were eating, finding some ill effect thereof upon them, they gave over eating, and cried out, 'O thou man of God, there is death in the pot.' Then said he, 'Bring some meal;' which being brought, he cast into the pot, and said, 'Pour out now for the people, that they may eat;' and then they did eat without harm.

While the prophet tarried here with the sons of the prophets, there came a man from Baalshalisa, and brought him bread of the first-fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and some full ears of corn in the husk. The prophet, knowing food was short among them, bid his servant set it before the people, that they might eat. The servant (wanting faith, the want of which brings often with it want of obedience) said, 'To what purpose should I set this before an hundred men?' But, said the prophet again, 'Give the people that they may eat: for thus saith the Lord, they shall eat, and shall leave thereof.' Upon this he set it before them; and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the Lord.

Before Elisha left them, these sons of the prophets, addressing themselves to him, shewed him that the place where they dwelt was too strait, so that they wanted room. Wherefore they desired him to let them go to Jordan, and from the banks thereof fetch every one a beam, or piece of timber, that they might therewith make them a more commodious place to dwell in. He bid them go; but they, not being willing to go without him, one of them said to him,

* A. M. 3110.

Vouchsafe, I pray thee, to go with thy servants. He consenting, went with them: and being come to Jordan, they fell to work to cut down timber. But as one of them was felling a tree for a beam with a borrowed axe, the axe-head, dropping off from the helve, fell into the water. At which the workman crying out, 'Alas, master! for it was borrowed:' the man of God asked him, 'Where it fell.' And when the workman had shewed him the place, the man of God cutting a stick, and casting it in there, immediately the axe did swim: so that the workman, by the prophet's direction, put forth his hand, and took it up.

Elisha now returning to Samaria, found his presence was needed there, * by reason of an extraordinary case, which thus happened:

Naaman, captain general of the host of the king of Syria, a man much renowned for his valour, and in great esteem with the king his master, was a leper. And the Syrians, upon some excursion which they had made upon Israel, having brought out of the land of Israel, amongst other captives, a little maid, who waited on Naaman's wife; the one day, discoursing with her mistress about her lord's disease, happened to say, 'Would God, my lord was with the prophet that is in Samaria: for he would recover him of his leprosy.'

One that overheard this, went and told the king what this Israelitish maid had said: whereupon the king put Naaman upon going; offering to give him his letters of commendation to the king of Israel. Naaman thereupon, taking with him a very noble present for the prophet, viz. ten talents of silver (amounting, at three hundred seventy-five pounds each, to three thousand seven hundred and fifty pounds) and six thousand pieces of gold (supposed to be shekels, which, at fifteen shillings a piece, came to four thousand five hundred pounds) and besides all this, ten changes of raiment; he left Damascus, and took his journey for Samaria, then the royal seat of the kings of Israel.

Being come thither, he delivered his letter, the contents whereof (so far as related to this business) ran thus:

'Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayst recover him of his leprosy.'

When the king of Israel had read the letter, not knowing the occasion upon which it was written, but suspecting a design to lie under it, he rent his clothes, and cried out, 'Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send to me, to recover a man of his leprosy? Wherefore consider, I pray you, said he to his servants, and see how he seeketh an occasion of quarrel against me.'

The report of this strange sort of letter, and of the king's trouble on the reading of it, quickly came to the prophet Elisha's ear, who thereupon sent this message to the king: 'Let the leper come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.'

The king, glad to be thus eased, referred Naaman to the prophet. Who thereupon coming with his chariot and horses, stood at the door of Elisha's house, expecting some great ceremonious and formal performances from him. But the prophet, quite contrary, not so much as going forth to see or speak with him, sent him only this message, 'Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again unto thee, and thou shalt be clean.'

This great disappointment of his expectation put Naaman into such a passion, that in great wrath he went away, saying 'I thought he would surely have come out to me, and have stood, and called on the name of the Lord his God, and have moved his hand to and fro over the place, and so have recovered the leper. What does he tell me of Jordan? Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?' So he turned, and went away in a rage. But after some time, when his anger was a little abated, his servants coming to him, intreated him to consider, 'Whether if the prophet had bid him do some great thing, he would not have done it: and how much more reasonable it was, when the prophet only bid him wash, for him to do so small a thing, in order to be cleansed.'

By their importunity and reasoning persuaded, he at length went down, and having dipped himself seven times in Jordan, his flesh came again, like unto the flesh of a little child; and he was clean, according to the saying of the man of God.

Then returning with all his retinue to the man of God, he came, and standing before him, said, 'Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but the God of

‘ of Israel. Now therefore, I pray, (seeing by thy means
 ‘ I have received so great a benefit from him) take thou a
 ‘ blessing (that is, a present) of thy servant.’ The prophet,
 not mercenary, answered; ‘ As the Lord liveth, before whom
 ‘ I stand (or whose servant I am) I will not receive any.’ And
 though Naaman urged him to take it, yet he utterly refused.

Naaman then, protesting that he would thenceforth offer
 neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but only
 to the Lord, desired of the prophet that he might have
 two mules burthen of earth, to carry home with him; zealously,
 but ignorantly, thinking, either that there was some inherent
 holiness in the earth of that country, or that the God of
 Israel would not be sacrificed unto upon any other earth than
 the earth of Israel.

But because he had now declared that he would never
 more worship any other God but the Lord; he deprecates
 an offence that might arise from his going into the house
 of Rimmon (the idol of the Syrians) with his master, when
 he went thither to worship. ‘ In this thing (said he to
 ‘ the prophet) the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my
 ‘ master goeth into the house of Rimmon, and he leaning
 ‘ on my hand, I bow myself in the house of Rimmon; when,
 ‘ on that occasion, I bow myself in the house of Rimmon,
 ‘ the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing.’ All the answer
 the prophet gave him was, ‘ Go in peace:’ which was,
 among the Israelites, a common form of valediction. And
 with it Naaman departed.

From these words of Naaman, and the prophet’s answer,
 a dispute hath arisen, whether Naaman’s bowing in the
 house of Rimmon, though not with an intent to worship the
 idol (but only to accommodate himself to his master’s pos-
 ture, who leaned on him, while he bowed himself in wor-
 ship to the idol) was a sin, or no.

Those time-serving ministers of state, and others, who
 are willing to sail with every wind of worldly preferment,
 excuse it, as allowed (in their opinion) by the prophet’s
 saying, Go in peace.

But others, seeing the danger of such a politick con-
 formity, and willing to foreclose the way thereto, read the
 words in the preter tence; which varying the version from
 [when my master goeth into, &c. and I bow,] to [when
 my master went into, &c. and I bowed,] make the sense
 of the words to be a craving pardon for a sinful practice

in

in times past, not a licence to continue it in time to come. See Godwyn's Moses and Aaron, l. 4. c. 7. p. 181. and Dan. Dyke's Deceitfulness of Man's Heart, p. 181.

Naaman was no sooner gone, but Gehazi, the prophet Elisha's servant (whose fingers itched to be handling some of Naaman's money and raiment) said within himself, 'Though my master hath spared this Syrian, in not receiving at his hand that present which he brought; yet I will surely run after him, and take somewhat of him.' Accordingly he followed Naaman, while he was yet got but a little way; and Naaman turning, and seeing him running after him, out of respect to his master alighting from his chariot went to meet him, and asked him, 'Is all well?' 'Yes, said Gehazi, all is well.' But forging a message in his master's name, he added, 'My master hath sent me to acquaint thee, that even now (since thou leftest him) there are come to him from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets; to whom he desires thee to give a talent of silver, and two changes of garments.'

Naaman, glad of this opportunity, to gratify (as he thought) the man of God, said to Gehazi, 'Let me persuade thee to take two talents:' and pressing him to take them, he bound up two talents (being seven hundred and fifty pounds) in two bags, with two changes of garments; and sent two of his servants with Gehazi, to carry them for him. They had not far to go, before they came to the tower: where Gehazi, taking the loading from the servants, disposed it in a private place, and sent them back after their master.

Then reckoning all was safe, in went he, and stood before his master, as he used to do. His master, by a divine revelation, knowing where he had been, and what he had done, asked him, 'Whence he came?' He, to excuse himself by another lie, answered, 'Thy servant went no whither.' No? replied his master, 'Went not my heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, or any other gifts? Of which he enumerated divers sorts. Since therefore thou hast coveted the things of Naaman, the leprosy of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever.'

* 2 Kings v.

This

This divine sentence, pronounced by the prophet as a due punishment to Gehazi for his covetousness and lying, immediately seized upon him: so that he went out from the presence of his master, a leper, white as snow.

Some time after this, the king of Syria making war upon Israel, and consulting and concluding with his servants in what place to pitch his camp against them, Elisha sent word to the king of Israel, to warn him that he should beware not to pass such a place, for thither the Syrians were come down, and lay in wait for him. And this the prophet did more than once or twice. By which means the king of Israel, sending to the place, and finding it was so, escaped the danger; and the king of Syria's designs upon him were disappointed and defeated.

This so troubled the king of Syria, that calling his servants together, he said unto them, 'Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel; and who it is among us that discovers our counsels to him.' Upon that one of his servants (who perhaps might have been at Samaria with Naaman) replied, 'It is none of us, my lord, O king: but Elisha the prophet, who is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.'

Then said the king, 'Go, and spy where he is, that I may send a party of horse to seize him, and bring him hither.' One of his servants said, 'He is at this time at Dothan (a little city not far from Samaria.)' The king thereupon sent horses and chariots, and a strong party; which came by night, and compassed the city about.

Early next morning, * when the prophet's servant (probably a new one, for we read no more of Gehazi's being with him, after that he was smitten with the leprosy for his wickedness) was got up, and gone abroad, he saw the host encompassing the city with both horses and chariots. Wherefore hastening to his master, he cried out, 'Alas, my master! how shall we do?' His master bid him not be afraid: 'for they (said he) that be with us, are more than they that be with them.'

And to convince him of it, he prayed to the Lord to open his servant's eyes, that he might see it. The Lord answered the prophet's prayer; and the young man's eyes being opened, he saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

* A. M. 3115.

The Syrians, thinking they had Elisha safe, came down to seize upon him. But Elisha praying again that the Lord would smite them with blindness, they were so blinded, that they did not know Elisha, when he came to them. He thereupon telling them, that was not the way, nor that the city they should go to, bid them follow him, and he would bring them to the man whom they sought. They following him, he led them to Samaria: and having brought them into the city, he prayed the Lord to open their eyes, that they might see where they were; and their sight being restored, they saw themselves in the midst of Samaria, and in the hands of their enemies.

The king of Israel would gladly have taken the advantage to have cut off so many of his enemies: but not daring to do it without consulting the prophet, he asked him, 'My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them?' 'No, by no means, said the prophet: for if they had been taken as prisoners of war, yet after quarter given, thou wouldst not have slain them; much less shouldst thou slay these, whom thou hast not taken in war. Rather, said he, set food before them; that having ate and drank, they may return to their master, and report to him the good usage they have had.' The prophet's counsel took place, and the Syrian soldiers, being well entertained, were peaceably dismissed.

Some think this kind treatment disposed the Syrians to a more peaceable temper, and to be quiet neighbours afterwards: because it follows in the text, 'So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.' Others think it only made the Syrians more wary how they ventured to make their incursions and inroads upon Israel with single brigades, or in small bands, but that they came afterwards in fuller armies; because the next verse tells us, that Benhadad king of Syria, after this (how long after is somewhat uncertain, but certainly it could not be very long after, for Benhadad did not live long after) having gathered all his host together, went up and besieged Samaria.

This was a very strait siege, and brought the besieged to great distress. * For as the siege caused a great famine in Samaria, so the long continuance of it increased the famine to that height, that an ass's head was sold for four-

score pieces of silver (which being taken for common shekels, and valued at fifteen pence a piece, came to five pounds of sterling money :) and the fourth part of a kab (or quart) of dove's dung, was sold for five pieces (or shekels) of silver, or six shillings and three-pence.

But every one among the besieged was not able to pay after this rate, if the commodity had been to be had. So that the poorer sort of people were driven to the utmost extremity, as the following instance will manifest. For as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, 'Help, my lord, O king.' He thinking she would importune him for bread, answered her somewhat roughly, 'If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? Out of the barn-floor, or out of the wine-press?' This fretful answer did not satisfy the woman; but it seems she continued her cry to the king, which made him ask her what ailed her. Whereupon she thus opened her complaint:

'This woman (pointing to another) said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to-day; and we will eat my son to-morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and on the next day I said to her, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.'

Though this was but one of those judgments which Moses had long before told the Israelites should fall upon them, Deut xxviii. 53. if they rebelled against the Lord (as these had done), and therefore might have been the less surprising, yet it being a thing so abhorrent from nature, for parents to feed upon the flesh of their own children, the king upon hearing thereof was so struck, that he rent his clothes; whereby the people that were present perceived that he had sackcloth underneath upon his flesh.

But though he had on him the outward signs of sorrow, he had not in him the signs of true repentance. For flying out most fiercely against the prophet Elisha, as if he had been instrumental to bring this distress upon them, he swore he would take off Elisha's head that day; and forthwith sent an officer to do it, himself also following him.

Elisha, mean while, sitting in his house, with the elders about him, had this design against his life revealed to him by the Spirit of the Lord. And thereupon, before the officer came, he said to the elders, 'See ye how this son of a murderer (meaning Ahab, the father of this king,

‘ who had slain Naboth, and other good men) hath sent to
 ‘ take away mine head. Look when the messenger comes,
 ‘ that ye shut the door, and keep him out a while (till I have
 ‘ delivered the message I have from the Lord) : for is not
 ‘ the sound of his master’s feet behind him ?’

He had scarce done speaking before the messenger came ;
 whom the elders entertaining at the door with discourse (and
 endeavouring to convince him that this grievous famine, and
 the misery that attended it, was not an accidental thing, but
 an evident judgment, sent by God upon them for their sins)
 he, or perhaps the king rather (who, following him, might
 by this time be come up to them) in a desperate mind said,
 ‘ Nay ! If this evil be of the Lord, what should I wait for
 ‘ (or trust in) the Lord any longer ?’

The prophet Elisha hearing this, could contain no longer * ;
 but cried out, ‘ Hear ye the word of the Lord : Thus saith
 ‘ the Lord, To-morrow, about this time, shall a measure
 ‘ (which Godwyn explains to be a gallon and half, or six
 ‘ quarts) of fine flour be sold for a shekel (or fifteen pence)
 ‘ and two measures of barley for a shekel.’

A lord that was present (on whose hand the king leaned)
 hearing this, and counting it an extravagant word, and im-
 possible to be performed, considering the shortness of the time
 prefixed for it, said in derision, ‘ If the Lord would make
 ‘ windows in heaven (to pour grain down upon them) could
 ‘ this thing be ?’

This incredulity of his, aggravated by his contempt of
 what the prophet had delivered in the name of the Lord,
 made the prophet give him this short answer ; ‘ Thou shalt
 ‘ see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.’

How such a plentiful supply of food should be brought to
 Samaria in so short a time, the enemy having begirt it with
 a close siege, and thereby cut off all avenues, was indeed be-
 yond the reach of man’s comprehension : but God hath secret
 ways of working, which, till he discovers them, are past
 finding out. And thus the thing was brought about :

There were at this time four leprous men, that sat at the
 entering in of the gate of Samaria. They were forced to be
 without the gate, because of their leprosy, that they might
 not infect others, Levit. xiii. 46. And they were willing to
 be as near the gate as they might, because of the enemy, that

* 2 Kings vii.

they might be in safety. If the famine was so hard within, it cannot be supposed these poor lepers could fare well without. When therefore they had sat there, till they were almost pined to death, they said one to another, 'Why sit we here until we die? If we should attempt to enter the city, and could get in, the famine being so strong in the city, we should die there; and if we sit still here, we shall die also. Now therefore come, let us fall into the host of the Syrians; if they save us alive we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.'

Thus resolved, they rose up in the twilight (for they durst not be seen to go to the enemy) and to the camp of the Syrians they went; expecting, no doubt, to have been seized by the centinels or out-guards. But when they came to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, they found no man there.

For in the night the Lord had caused the Syrian host to hear a noise of chariots and of horses, as if there had been a great army coming upon them. At which terrified, they said one to another, 'Lo the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and of the Egyptians; and they are come upon us.' Having with this apprehension frightened one another, they arose and fled in the twilight, leaving their tents, with their horses and their asses tied as they were, even the whole camp just as it was, and ran for their lives.'

When these lepers had passed through the camp, and found the coast clear, the first thing they did was to satisfy their hunger. Wherefore entering into one tent, they ate and drank till they had filled themselves: and then carrying out silver, and gold, and raiment, went and hid it. Then coming again, they entered another tent; and carrying thence also, they went and hid that too.

At length, remembering themselves, they said one to another, 'We do not well: for this is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace. If we tarry till the morning, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, let us go tell the king's household.'

Returning then to the gate of Samaria, they called to the porter, and told him the good news: he told it to the rest of the porters, and they carried it to the king's household within.

The king thereupon arose; but suspecting it to be but a stratagem of war, said to his servants, ' I will now shew you what the Syrians have done to us. They know we are hungry; therefore to entice us out of the city, they are gone out of their camp, and have hid themselves in the fields, with design, when we come out, to catch us alive, and so get into the city.'

To prevent that (said one of the servants) ' Let some take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain (which will be no great hazard: for the horses, like the people, are almost pined to death); and let us send and see whether it be so or no.'

This counsel being approved, they mounted two men upon two of their chariot-horses, and the king sent them after the host of the Syrians, to discover what course they had taken.

These scouts having traced them as far as Jordan, and found the way full of garments and vessels (which the Syrians, to lighten themselves, had cast away in their hasty flight) returned, and told the king so. Whereupon the people, glad of this unexpected deliverance, went out to ransack the tents of the Syrians. Where, besides great riches, such store of provisions for food was found, that it being brought into Samaria, a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord by Elisha.

That these stores might not be embezzled and wasted, nor the people be disorderly in taking them, the king appointed that lord, on whose hand he leaned (and who had before slighted the prophet's prediction) to have the charge of the gate through which the spoil of the Syrian camp was to be brought in. But the hunger-bitten people, impatient of delay, and pressing hard to come at that they so much wanted, trod upon that lord in the gate, and killed him; so that, though he saw the plenty, yet he tasted not of it, as the man of God had before told him. And this just punishment came upon him, not only for his incredulity, but for his contempt of the word of the Lord by his servant the prophet.

Though Samaria, by reason of the siege, was most pressed with this famine*, yet all the land of Israel felt it for seven years together. Of which the prophet Elisha gave timely notice unto that Shunamitish woman, who had so kindly en-

* 2 Kings viii.

tertained him, and whose son he had before restored to life ; advising her to go, with her household, and sojourn where she could, until the famine should be over.

She, thus forewarned by the man of God, went with her household into the land of the Philistines, and sojourned there during the time of the famine in Israel, which lasted seven years. But when the seven years were ended, and the famine was over, returning to her own country again, she found her house and land possessed by others, who, in her absence, had entered thereinto. So that she was obliged to address herself to the king, and pray to be restored to her estate.

Coming for that end to the court, she found the king talking with Gehazi (the old servant of the prophet Elisha) who, at the king's command, was recounting unto him the great things his master the prophet had done : and in the course of his narration, was just then relating how his master had restored a dead body to life (meaning the son of this woman), when the woman with her son came in, to present her petition to the king. Whereupon Gehazi told the king that this was the woman he had been speaking of, and this was her son whom Elisha had restored to life.

This fell out very opportunely and happily for the poor woman. For the king, who before was taken with the relation, was now so affected with the providence that had brought the woman and her son to his presence, whereby he had the opportunity of seeing and conversing with a person that had been dead, and was raised again to life, that after he had inquired of the woman about it, and had received from her a confirmation of the truth thereof, he gave charge to one of his officers not only to put the woman into possession of her whole estate again, but to restore her all the mean profits thereof, from the time she had left the land until that day.

About this time Benhadad, king of Syria, was sick * ; and hearing that the prophet Elisha was come to Damascus (which was then the royal city of Syria) he bid Hazael, one of his servants, take a present with him, and go meet the man of God, and by him inquire of the Lord whether he should recover of that disease.

Hazael thereupon, taking a royal present, forty camels burthen of the choice things of Damascus (a present fitter for

* A. M. 3118.

a prince to make, than for a prophet of God to receive) went to meet Elisha. And setting himself before him, said, 'Thy son Benhadad, king of Syria, hath sent me to thee, saying, 'Shall I recover of this disease? Go tell him, answered Elisha, he may certainly recover. Howbeit, added he, the Lord hath shewed me that he shall surely die.'

In which answer, though at the first sight there may seem to be somewhat like a contradiction, yet rightly taken, there is none. For the former part of the answer [thou mayst certainly recover] related to the nature of his disease, which of itself was not mortal, but curable; the latter part [he shall surely die] related to the foreknowledge the prophet had received from God, of the treachery Hazael would use against him; whereby he would surely take away his life, to make way for his own accession to the crown.

The sense whereof, and of the mischief he would afterwards do to Israel, caused the prophet, with a settled countenance, to look stedfastly on Hazael, till Hazael was ashamed, and the man of God wept.

Of which Hazael taking notice, asked, 'Why weepeth my lord?' 'Because, answered the prophet, I know the evil thou wilt do unto the children of Israel. For their strong-holds wilt thou set on fire, their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children in pieces, and rip up their women with child.'

'But what! replied Hazael, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?' Wherein he seems to express an abhorrence of so great an inhumanity. And perhaps designed withal to invalidate the prophet's words, by intimating how unlikely it was, that he, a private man of no great condition (and therefore represents himself but as a dog) should be able to achieve such great matters; for the prophet answered, 'The Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria.'

This was enough for Hazael. Away he went from Elisha, and returning to the king his master, reported the prophet's answer wrong. For whereas the prophet bid him say to his master, 'Thou mayest certainly recover *;' he, when his master asked him what the prophet said to him, replied, 'He told me that thou shouldst surely recover.' But to make sure that he might not recover, he on the morrow took a

thick cloth, and having dipt it in water, spread it upon the sick king's face; so that, being therewith stifled, he died; and Hazael thereupon usurping the throne, reigned in his stead.

Having spent some time in Israel and Syria, let us now look back into Judah, and see how things went there.

Jehoshaphat, the good king of Judah, was now dead, leaving his son Jehoram (whom four years before he had taken into a participation of the government) in sole possession of the throne of Judah. But far unlike to his father was he; for he walked in the way of the kings of Israel*, like as did the house of Ahab, and wrought that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord. For which this reason is given, That he had the daughter of Ahab to wife. So dangerous a thing it is to take a wife out of a wicked family.

So far did this Jehoram forsake the Lord God of his fathers, that he made high-places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah thereunto. And so unnaturally cruel was he, that to strengthen himself in his government, he slew all his brethren, the other sons of his father Jehoshaphat, six in number, with divers also of the princes.

But he went not either unproved or unpunished. For there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet (as the text hath it) who had been translated some years before (if, from the likeness of the names, Elijah hath not crept into the text, instead of Elisha, who was then living. But Tremellius and Junius say, Elijah writ it by prophetic foresight, before he was translated, and left it for him). However it was, the contents of the writing were thus:

‘ Thus saith the Lord God of David thy father: because
 ‘ thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father,
 ‘ nor in the ways of Aza king of Judah; but hast walked in
 ‘ the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah, and
 ‘ the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to go a whoring, like to the
 ‘ whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy
 ‘ brethren of thy father's house, who were better than thyself:
 ‘ behold, with a great plague will the Lord smite thy people,
 ‘ and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods; and
 ‘ thou shalt also have great sickness, by disease of thy bowels,
 ‘ until thy bowels fall out, by reason of the continual sicknesses.’

* 2 Kings viii.

2 Chron. xxi.

Very great and very particular are the punishments here denounced against this wicked king, for his great and very particular sins. All which came on him successively, in a little time, to the full completing of the sentence given.

For first, in his days the Edomites (whom king David had subdued, 2 Sam. viii. 14. and who from that time to this had no king of their own, but were governed by a vice-roy, or deputy, set over them, 1 Kings xxii. 47.) revolted from under the dominion of Judah, and made themselves a king. And though Jehoram went forth against them with his princes, and all his chariots with him; and setting upon the Edomites by night, did some small execution upon them, yet did Edom maintain the revolt, and was never reduced under subjection to Judah any more. Whereby the prophecy of the patriarch Isaac (the father of both Edom and Israel) foretelling both Edom's subjection to Israel, and his breaking afterwards Jacob's yoke from off his neck, Gen. xxvii. 40. seems to have been in great part completed.

At the same time that Edom thus revolted, revolted also Libnah, a city and territory of good account; which in Joshua's time had a king of its own, Josh. x. 29, 30. and was afterwards given to the children of Aaron, for a city of refuge for the man-slayer, Josh. xxi. 13.

And to afflict him the more, the Lord stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians that bordered upon the Ethiopians. These coming against Judah, brake into Jerusalem, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, together with his wives and his sons: so that he had never a son left him save Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons, who is also called Ahaziah, 2 Chron. xxii. 1. and Azariah, ver. 6.

Thus was the punishment denounced against Jehoram fulfilled upon him, in his people, in his wives, in his children, and in his goods*. That part only remained which related to his person. For the accomplishment whereof after all the rest, the Lord smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease; under which when he had laboured two whole years, his bowels, by reason of his violent sickness, fell out; 'Leaving him who had no bowels of compassion towards his own brethren (whom he slew) without bowels to sustain life in himself.'

* 2 Kings viii.

2 Chron. xxii.

Thus died Jehoram king of Judah (a bad son of a good father) without being desired; which his people shewed by making no burning for him, like the burning for his fathers (which was done with perfumes and sweet odours of spices): yet they buried him in the city of David, though not in the sepulchres of the kings. His reign is determinately eight years: but of those he is supposed to have reigned four as *co-rex* with his father; and the other four as *sole rex*, by himself.

To him succeeded his youngest son Ahaziah (called also Azariah, 2 Chron. xxii. 6. and Jehoahaz, chap. xxi. 17.) all his other sons being slain before, in their father's life-time, by the Arabian army that invaded Judah, *ibid.* But some diversity there is in the account of his age when he came to the crown, as it is delivered in the books of Kings and Chronicles. For in 2 Kings viii. 26. we read, Ahaziah was two-and-twenty years old when he began to reign. But in 2 Chron. xxii. 2. we read Ahaziah was forty-and-two years old when he began to reign.

To accommodate this difference, some have imagined that he was made king while his father reigned, and after his father's death was confirmed king, when he was forty-and-two years old. And this way the marginal note in the Bishops Bible, on 2 Kings viii. 26. says it is to be understood.

But how long or short soever his reign was, or at what age soever he came to it, this king Ahaziah walked in the ways of the house of Ahab; for his mother, whose name was Athaliah, was his counsellor to do wickedly. She is said to be the daughter of Omri, 2 Chron. xxii. 2. which hath made some call her Ahab's sister: but she was indeed the daughter of Ahab, 2 Chron. xxi. 6. and so the grand-daughter of Omri.

Having so ill a counsellor, it is not to be wondered that he took evil courses, and did evil in the sight of the Lord, like the house of Ahab. For as his father, while he lived, was not likely to direct him better, either by advice or example; so after his death, his mother, and others of that family, by their pernicious counsels, led him to destruction. For by their advice it was that he went with Jehoram, (son of Ahab, king of Israel) to war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth-Gilead. Where Jehoram (or Joram, for so also, by contraction, he is called) being beaten and wounded, he returned to Jezreel, to be healed of his wounds: and thither also

also went Ahaziah to visit him, and bear him company while he lay sick of his wounds.

Mean while the prophet Elisha (that he might perform what his master the prophet Elijah was commanded to do, 1 Kings xix. 16.) calling to him one of the sons of the prophets, said unto him, 'Gird up thy loins' (that is, as interpreters generally understand it, from the custom in those eastern countries of wearing garments long and loose, Gird up thy long coat, or gown, about thy loins, that it may not, by hanging at thy heels, hinder thy speedy running) and take this box of oil in thy hand to Ramoth-Gilead. And when thou art come thither, look out there Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi; and go in, and make him arise up from among his brethren (or companions) and lead him to an inner chamber. Then take the box of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, Thus saith the Lord, I have anointed thee king over Israel. Then open the door, and flee, and tarry not.

With this instruction the young prophet hastened to Ramoth-Gilead. Where finding the captains of the host sitting together, he stepped in amongst them, and said, 'I have an errand to thee, O captain.' But not distinguishing him by name, Jehu asked, 'Unto which of us all?' To whom the prophet replied, 'To thee, O captain.' Jehu thereupon arising, went with him into a private room in the house, where the prophet having poured the oil on his head, thus delivered his message to him.

'Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the Lord, even over Israel. And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master; that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel. For the whole house of Ahab shall perish; and I will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel. And I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha, the son of Abijah. And the dogs shall eat Jezebel, in the portion of Jezreel; and there shall be none to bury her. And having thus said, the prophet opened the door, and fled.'

* 2 Kings ix. A. M. 3120.

In this passage we may observe, that although Elisha, sending a young man on this so important an errand, took care to give him particular instruction and direction how to behave himself in every part of the action, relating not only to the anointing of Jehu, but to his own safety in escaping afterwards, yet the particulars of the message, with respect to the end for which Jehu was anointed, and the work to which he was appointed, namely, the utter destruction of Ahab's house (contained in ver. 7, 8, 9, 10. of 2 Kings ix.) it doth not from the text appear that Elisha did dictate to him. But rather it may be supposed, that the messenger (being a prophet, though but young) received the particulars of his message immediately from the Lord.

When the prophet was gone, and Jehu come forth to his companions again, they asked him, first, more generally, if all was well *: Then more particularly, 'Wherefore that fanatick, or mad fellow (so were the good prophets, even then, by some contemptuously called) came to him?'

He would have put them off with a general answer, telling them, 'They knew the man and his communication' (as much as to say, 'Ye see he is one of the prophets, and therefore ye may well guess at his business). But they, not satisfied with such a general answer, pressed him to tell them his message more particularly.' Whereupon he told them, 'Thus and thus he spake to me, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I have anointed thee king over Israel.'

As soon as they heard that, not staying to hear more, they took their garments, and putting them under him on the top of the stairs, they, with sound of trumpet, proclaimed him king. He thereupon wisely taking the captains into counsel, said to them, 'If it be your mind, let none of you go forth, nor escape out of the city' (Ramoth-Gilead, where all this was transacted) to carry tidings of it to Jezreel, where the king lay sick of his wounds.

Care being taken of that, Jehu forthwith set forward for Jezreel, that he might surprize and seize the king there. But ere he could get thither, the centinel, or watchman, that stood on the tower of Jezreel, espying the company of Jehu on the way, gave warning thereof. Whereupon king Joram ordered a scout or horseman to be sent forth to meet them, to inquire if they came peaceably.

* 2 Kings ix. 2 Chron. xxii.

As soon as the messenger met Jehu, he asked him in the king's name, if he came in a friendly and peaceable manner? To whom Jehu answering short, said, 'What hast thou to do with peace? Turn thee behind me.'

The watchman on the tower presently gave notice that the messenger was gone to them; but did not come back again. Whereupon the king sent forth a second horseman; who being come, and in the king's name asking the same question, 'Is it peace?' received from Jehu, the same answer, 'What hast thou to do with peace? Turn thee behind me.'

When the watchman had given account of this also, and had told them that the marching was like the marching of Jehu, the son (that is, the grandson) of Nimshi, for that he marched furiously, king Joram called for his chariot, and taking with him his guest, Ahaziah king of Judah, (but each in his own chariot) they went out against Jehu, whom they met (Providence so ordering it) in the very spot of ground which Ahab had taken from Naboth the Jezreelite. And as soon as Joram came near to Jehu, he also asked the same question, 'Is it peace, Jehu?' And received from him this rough answer, 'What peace! so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?'

By that answer Joram knew what he was to expect. Wherefore thinking it better to trust to his heels than to his hand, he cried out, 'There is treachery, O Ahaziah:' and turning away, fled. But Jehu drawing a bow with his full strength, smote king Joram between his arms, so that the arrow went out at his heart, and he sank down in his chariot. Which Jehu observing, bid Bidkar his captain take him up, and cast him into the portion of the field of Naboth. For remember, said he, how that when thou and I rode together after Ahab his father, the Lord laid this burden upon him, saying, 'Surely, I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the Lord.' Now therefore take and cast him into the plat of ground, according to the word of the Lord.

When Ahaziah, the king of Judah, saw this, he fled by the way of the garden-house: and Jehu following after him, bid 'Smite him also in his chariot:' which they did; whereupon he, finding himself mortally wounded, fled to Megiddo, and there died. From thence his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and there buried him in his sepulchre, among

among his fathers, in the city of David. But his destruction is expressly said to be of God, 2 Chron. xxii. 7. by his going to Joram; and indeed his going to Joram hastened it, and brought it more immediately on him: not but that it was due to him, not only as he was a branch of Ahab's family (being the son of Ahab's daughter) to all which utter destructions was denounced; but as he walked, the little time he reigned, in the way of his grandfather Ahab.

But Jehu, pursuing his course, went on to Jezreel. Whither when the queen dowager Jezebel (Ahab's widow) heard he was come, she resolving to hold up her grandeur to the last, painted her face, and tricked up her head; and as he entered in at the gate, she looking out at the window, upbraidingly asked him, 'Had Zimri peace who slew his master?'

Jehu thereupon, looking up to the window, asked, 'Who is on my side? Who?' and there looking out to him two or three eunuchs, he bid them throw her down, and they did so: and in the fall some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses; and Jehu trod her under foot.

This execution done, Jehu went in, and did eat and drink. But bethinking himself of Jezebel, he said to some about him, 'Go see now after this cursed woman, and bury her, for she is a king's daughter; and so indeed she was the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, 1 Kings xvi. 31. But when they came to bury her, they found no more of her but the skull and the feet, and the palms of her hands; for the dogs had eaten the rest. Which when they had reported to Jehu, he made this observation on it; 'This (said he) is the (effect of) the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, when he said, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel: and the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field, in the portion of Jezreel; so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel. There shall not be so much of her left, as whereby she may be known.'

Thus died this wretched queen, notorious for her wickedness; notorious also for the eminent judgment which brought her to this wretched end. Whose memory has been hateful in all ages since; and whose name, near a thousand years

after her death, was used enigmatically to represent the greatest seducer and idolatress in the early time of the Christian church, Rev. ii. 20.

King Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria (under which term, nephews, or grandsons, are sometimes comprehended in scripture-phrase). Here were heirs enough to the crown of Israel; and likely enough, one would think, it might have been, that, out of so many some one or other might have tried his title with Jehu. Jehu, willing to sound the minds of the princes and rulers of Samaria, who had the care and oversight of Ahab's children, sent them a braving letter, in these terms:

'As soon as this letter cometh to you, seeing your master's sons are with you, and there are with you chariots and horses, a fenced city also, and armour; look out even the best and fittest of your master's sons, and set him on his father's throne, and fight for your master's house.'

When they had read this letter, they were exceedingly afraid; and said one to another, * Behold, two kings stood not before him; how then shall we stand? He therefore that was over the king's house, and he that was over the city, together with the elders, and those that had the education of Ahab's children, sent to Jehu saying, 'We are thy servants, and we will do all that thou shalt bid us: we will not make any king; do thou that which is good in thine eyes.'

Upon this submissive message, Jehu sent them another letter, in which he wrote, 'If ye be mine, and will hearken unto my voice, then take ye the heads of the men, your master's sons, and come to me to Jezreel by to-morrow this time.'

When they had received this second letter, they, without hesitation, took the king's sons, being seventy persons, and slew them; and putting their heads in baskets, sent them to Jehu at Jezreel.

When the messengers told Jehu that they had brought the heads of the king's sons, he gave order they should be laid in two heaps at the entering in of the gate until the morning. And in the morning, going forth to them, he said to all the people, 'Ye be righteous: Behold, I conspired against my master, and slew him: but who slew all

* 2 Kings x.

‘ these? Know now, that there shall not fall unto the earth any thing of the word of the Lord, which the Lord spake concerning the house of Ahab; for the Lord hath done that which he spake by his servant Elijah.’

Having now slain all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and his kinsfolks, and his priests, until he had left him none remaining there, Jehu departed thence, and took his way towards Samaria, to see what of Ahab’s stock was yet left there. And as he was at the shearing-house in the way, he met with the brethren (or rather brother’s sons, 2 Chron. xxii. 8.) of Ahaziah late king of Judah, who seemed not to have known any thing of this sudden revolution; for when he asked them, who they were; they answered, ‘ We are the brethren (or near kinsmen) of Ahaziah; and we go down to salute the children of the king and of the queen.’ Whereupon he bid his guards take them alive; which they did, and then slew them at the pit of the shearing-house, even two-and-forty men, not sparing one of them.

He was gone but a little further on his way, ere he lighted on Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, coming to meet him. And having saluted him, he asked, ‘ Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?’ To which Jehonadab answering, ‘ It is:’ ‘ If it be so, said Jehu, Give me thy hand.’ Jehonadab thereupon giving him his hand, Jehu took him up to him into the chariot, saying, ‘ Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord.’ And being come to Samaria, he slew all that remained to Ahab there, till he had destroyed him in his whole race.

But Jehu had a principal part of his work yet to do, which was to destroy the priests of Baal; for the accomplishment of which, he thought it necessary to join policy with his strength. Wherefore having gathered all the people together, he told them, ‘ Ahab had served Baal a little, but Jehu would serve him much. Now therefore, said he, call unto me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests, let none be wanting; for I have a great sacrifice to offer to Baal; whosoever shall be wanting, he shall not live.’ But Jehu did this in subtlety, to the intent that he might destroy all the worshippers of Baal.

Then causing a solemn assembly for Baal to be proclaimed, he sent through all Israel (to give notice thereof;) and all the worshippers of Baal came in such numbers, that they filled the house of Baal from one end to the other.

Then ordered Jehu that vestments should be brought forth for all the worshippers of Baal*. Which being done, he and Jehonadab went in among them, and bid the worshippers of Baal search, and see that none of the servants of the Lord were there with them, but the worshippers of Baal only. And when they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt-offerings, Jehu appointed fourscore men to watch without; unto whom he said, 'If any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escape, he that letteth him go shall die for him.'

This done, and the burnt-offering ended, Jehu said to the guard and to the captains, 'Go in and slay them: let none come forth.' They thereupon going in among them, smote them all with the edge of the sword: and having cast them out, they went to the city of the house of Baal, and brought forth the images out of the house of Baal, and burnt them. And having broken down the image of Baal, they brake down also the house of Baal, and made it a draught-house from thenceforward. Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel.

Yet for all this, from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, (viz. from following after the golden calves that were in Bethel and in Dān) Jehu departed not. For that being not so much a religious as a politick piece of idolatry, contrived at the first division of the kingdom to keep the Israelites from going up to Jerusalem to worship, lest they should in time take the crown along with them, and reunite themselves to Judah, the same interest and reason of state, that set up those calves, prevailed still to keep them up.

So acceptable, however, to God was Jehu's zeal, and hearty diligence, in executing his judgments upon Ahab's house, that he thereupon entailed the crown of Israel upon his family unto the fourth generation. Telling him, 'Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.'

Yet because Jehu, for all this great favour promised him, did not take heed to walk in the way of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart, nor departed from the sins of Jeroboam, the Lord began, even in his time, to cut Israel short;

* 2 Kings x. 2 Chron. xxiii.

suffering Hazael, king of Syria, to smite them in all their coasts.

For the rest of the acts of Jehu, all that he did, and all his might, we are referred to the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel. Which cannot be either of those books which are now extant under that name; for very little mention is made of him at all in either of those two books; nothing in comparison of what is said of him in these 9th and 10th chapters of the second book of Kings. Whence we may well conclude, that that book of Chronicles, to which we are here, and often elsewhere referred, is lost.

That which remains of the history of Jehu is, that having reigned over Israel in Samaria eight-and-twenty years, he slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria, and Jehoahaz his son reigned in his stead.

It was now a very bloody time: for as Jehu had shed much blood in Israel, so Athaliah (the queen dowager of Judah, and mother to the late king Ahaziah, a right daughter of Jezebel) when she saw her son Ahaziah was slain, usurping to herself the government of Judah, did, in revenge of her father Ahab's family, destroy all the seed royal, that she might utterly root out the stock of good king Jehoshaphat, and secure to herself and her other sons the kingdom. For Broughton says, she had sons by another: and that she had, may be gathered from 2 Chron. xxiv. 7.

But though she made great havock in the royal family, yet Divine Providence hindered her from totally extirpating Jehoshaphat's race. For Jehoshaba, the daughter of king Joram, and sister to the late king Ahaziah, took little Jehoahaz (called also, by contraction, Joash, 2 Chron. xxii. 11.) an infant of a year old, whom she had stolen from among the king's sons that were slain, and hid him, with his nurse, in a bed-chamber in the house of the Lord, which she had the better means of doing, being herself the wife of Jehoiada the high-priest.

Six years together was this young prince concealed, and brought up by his aunt, unknown to Athaliah, who, during all that time, reigned over Judah.

But in the seventh year, his uncle Jehoiada the priest, resolving now to bring him forth, and set him up for king, first strengthened himself, by taking the captains and rulers into counsel and covenant with him, to maintain and defend both the person and title of the young king. Which covenant he
made

made them confirm by oath, in the house of the Lord, and then shewed them the king's son, little Jehoash.

Then directing the manner how this great enterprize should be accomplished, he gave order that the Levites, and chief of the fathers, should be gathered out of all the cities of Judah to Jerusalem. Where being assembled, and having taken the covenant for setting up the young prince for king, and maintaining his title, Jehoiada the priest appointed them their several posts. Ordering a third part of the priests and ministering Levites (whose turn it was to wait in the temple from sabbath to sabbath) to guard the doors; a third part to guard the king's house (that is, his apartment in the house of the Lord) and to attend his person; and a third part to keep one of the principal gates; leaving the people in the courts of the house of the Lord, with this charge, that if any one should attempt to break in within the ranges, he should be put to death.

Things thus disposed, and the priests and Levites having weapons delivered to them out of king David's armoury, which was kept in the house of the Lord; Jehoiada brought forth the king's son, and set the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony (the book of the law, according to the law, Deut. xvii. 18). And having anointed him king, they clapped their hands and shouted for joy; and with sound of trumpet proclaiming him, said, 'God save the king.'

The noise that was made by the acclamations of the people, as they ran to and fro rejoicing, startled queen Athaliah, who little thinking that the end of her reign, and of her life also, was so near, hastened to the house of the Lord to see what the matter was. But when she came in, and saw the young king standing at his pillar at the entering in, with the princes by him, the guards about him; and the people of the land rejoicing*, with instruments of music; and trumpets sounding, she rent her clothes, and cried out, 'Treason, treason:' herself the traitor. But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains and officers of the host to have her forth without the ranges (that she might not be slain in the house of the Lord) and to kill any that should attempt to take her part. Whereupon they laid hands on her, and having brought her out by the horse-gate, slew her there with the sword.

Then did Jehoiada make a covenant between the Lord and the king with the people; whereby they bound themselves to be the Lord's people. Which done, the people went out to the house of Baal, and brake it down. His altars also, and his images, they brake in pieces: and slew Mattan, the priest of Baal, before the altar (according to the law, Deut. xiii. 9.)

After which, Jehoiada the priest (having purged out some corruptions, which in the former reigns had been brought into the church) took the captains of the host, with the nobles and governors, and all the people of the land, and having brought down the king from the house of the Lord, through the high gate into the king's house, set him on the throne of the kingdom. At which all the people rejoiced, and the city was quiet, after they had slain Athaliah.

Seven years old was Joash when he began to reign*, which was in the seventh year of Jehu king of Israel, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. And for so long of that time as Jehoiada, the high-priest lived, who instructed him in the way of God, he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. Whence we may observe, what great helps good counsel and good example are to a prince. Yet the high-places were not taken away, but the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high-places; which, so long as they did it to the Lord, not to Baal, or other idols, was winked at, though expressly contrary to God's command, Numb. xxxiii. 52. and commonly destructive to themselves.

Though in the king's minority Jehoiada had somewhat reformed the ecclesiastical state, and the officers therein, yet he had not done any thing towards repairing the house of God; which, through the corruption of former times, had been not only suffered to go to decay, but had also been spoiled by that wicked woman Athaliah and her children, 2 Chron. xxiv. 7.

When therefore Jehoash (or Joash) was grown up to man's estate, he set his mind to repair the house of the Lord. And having gathered the priests and the Levites together, he gave them in charge to go out unto the cities of Judah, and gather money of all the people to repair the house of the Lord from year to year.

To this service was appropriated all the money of the dedicated things that was brought unto the house of the Lord,

* 2 Kings xii. 2 Chron. xxiv.

the ransom, or redemption-money (half a shekel upon every head that was taxable, Exod. xxx. 12.) and all the money that came in by free-will offerings. This the king ordered the priests to take, every one of his acquaintance, and with this to repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach should be found.

But though he expressly charged them to hasten the work, yet the Levites hastened it not. So that in the three-and-twentieth year of king Joash, they had not repaired the breaches of the house.

The king therefore calling for Jehoiada, and the other priests, and blaming them for their negligence therein, forbade them to receive any more money of their acquaintance on that account; and required them to deliver up what they had received for that service.

Upon this reproof, the priests (taking the money of the trespass-offerings, and of the sin-offerings, to their own use) consented to receive no more money from the people on the other accounts, nor take upon them the charges of repairing the breaches of the house. But Jehoiada the priest, at the king's commandment, took a chest, and having bored an hole in the lid of it, big enough for money to be put in at, set it beside the altar, on the right hand, as they went in at the house of the Lord. And proclamation being made through Judah and Jerusalem, for all to bring in to the Lord the collection which Moses, the servant of the Lord, had laid upon Israel in the wilderness; all the princes and people rejoicing thereat, brought in, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end. And as oft as they found there was much money in the chest, the king's secretary, and the high-priest (or his officer) took it out, and told it, and putting it up in bags, delivered it to the surveyors of the work, who paid it away to the carpenters, builders, masons, and stone-cutters, as well for their workmanship, as for the timber, stone, and other materials, which were used for repairing the house of the Lord.

This so encouraged the workmen, that they plied the work, and finished it. And when they had put the house of God in good repair, they brought the rest of the money that was left, before the king and Jehoiada (for though they reckoned not with the men, who were intrusted with the money for the workmen; yet they dealt faithfully in it) and out of that remainder of the money were made vessels of silver and of gold,

gold, to minister, and to offer withal, in the house of the Lord. For very likely it is, that in the former wicked reigns, as the house of the Lord had been defaced, so the vessels of that house had been embezzled and lost, or transferred to the house of Baal; and having been thereby polluted, were not fit for the service of God any more.

The high-priest Jehoiada had now attained to a good old age, being an hundred and thirty years old when he died. And because he had done good in Israel, both towards God, and towards his house, in restoring the true worship of God (which both king and people kept to all his days) and in settling the kingdom again in the house of David; therefore they buried him in the city of David, and amongst the kings.

But when once this good man's head was laid, the princes of Judah, who had lived in the former idolatrous reigns, came and made obeisance to the king; and by their flattery prevailing on him, drew him, with themselves, to forsake the house of the Lord God of their fathers (upon which they had so lately bestowed so much charge) and to serve groves and idols; for which great trespass of theirs, wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem from the Lord. Yet he sent prophets to them (such as he raised up, and employed on particular occasions) to bring them again unto the Lord; but they would not give ear.

Then came the spirit of the Lord upon Zechariah (the son of Jehoiada the late high-priest) who taking up his standing above the people, said thus unto them, 'Thus saith the Lord, 'Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? Because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you.'

This so provoked those backsliders, that they conspired against him, and stoned him to death, even in the court of the house of the Lord*, which they stuck not thus to pollute with innocent blood; and (which was yet worse) they did it at the command of the king; who too ungratefully forgetting the manifold kindnesses which his father Jehoiada had done for him, both in saving his life, and setting him on the throne, unjustly and barbarously slew his son. He being at the point of death said, 'The Lord look upon it, and require it.'

Nor was it long before the Lord did require the innocent blood of this his servant, upon both king and people. For

at the end of the year, Hazael king of Syria, coming up with his host, fought against Gath (a principal city, which king David had taken from the Philistines, 1 Chron. xviii. 1.) and took it. And from thence marching up to Jerusalem, he destroyed all the princes of Jerusalem; which struck such a terror into king Joash, that he took all the hallowed things, which Jehoshaphat, and Jehoram, and Ahaziah his fathers, kings of Judah, had in three generations before dedicated, with the things which he had dedicated also, and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the house of the Lord, and in the king's house, and delivered it to Hazael king of Syria, that he might depart from Jerusalem.

Remarkably eminent was the judgment of God upon these princes of Judah, that they, who had been the immediate instruments to draw king Joash from the service and worship of the true God (in which he had been religiously educated) to the worship of idols, should themselves be destroyed so soon after by an idolator and worshipper of idols. And that it might the more evidently appear to be a divine judgment from God, upon both the king and people of Judah, for their having forsaken the Lord God of their fathers, he at this time delivered a very great host of Judah into the hands of a small company of men of the Syrian army.

Neither yet did the judgment stop there, with respect to king Joash himself: but (blood requiring blood) when the Syrians were departed from him (who left him labouring under great diseases) his own servants (Zabad, the son of an Ammonitess, and Jehozabad, the son of a Moabitess) conspiring against him for the blood of the son of Jehoiada the priest, slew him on his bed, and he died, after he had reigned forty years. And because he was a king, they buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings, because he had forsaken the way of the Lord.

In the three-and-twentieth year of this Jehoash king of Judah, Jehu dying, his son Jehoahaz possessed the throne of Israel. But he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, following the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin in the golden calves. For which the anger of the Lord being kindled against Israel, he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and afterwards into the hand of Benhadad the son of Hazael, all his days. Yet when Jehoahaz besought the Lord, the Lord (seeing the oppression wherewith the king of Syria oppressed Israel) hearkened

hearkened unto him, and in due time gave Israel a saviour; so that they shook off the Syrian yoke, and dwelt securely in their tents, as they had done in times past.

But this deliverance was not wrought by Jehoahaz, nor in his time (at least, not in the time of his sole reign) but by his son Joash, or Jehoash, either after his father's death, or as *co-rer* with him (for such synarchies, or joint-reigns of father and son together, were very frequent in those times, and render the chronology much more difficult). But Hazael, king of Syria, oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz, and reduced him to so low a condition, that he left him but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen, having destroyed the rest by his frequent victories over them.

The prophet Elisha, though very old, was yet living; and might now to his satisfaction in one sense, though sorrow in another, see the fulfilling of that prediction which he had given Hazael, concerning the ravage and cruelty which he would exercise upon Israel, when he should come to wear the Syrian crown. Which if the sense thereof so affected him, when, in the spirit of prophecy, he only foresaw it, as then to draw a shower of tears from his eyes, what may we suppose it now did, when he saw it actually performed?

But he had the comfort also to foresee and foretell the end of it *. For when Joash, the son of this debased Jehoahaz, came to the crown, he going to visit the good old prophet Elisha (who was then fallen sick of the sickness whereof he died) wept over his face, (bemoaning the approaching loss of so great a prophet, and so holy a man, who by his forewarnings of dangers, his wholesome counsels, and prevalent prayers, was as a guard and bulwark to the nation) and cried out, 'O my father, my father! The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!' alluding, perhaps, to the like expression, used long before by this good prophet, at the departure of his endeared master Elijah.

The prophet, thereupon, as it were reviving, and knowing that the Lord had determined, by this king Joash, to deliver Israel from the oppression of Syria, bid him take a bow and arrows; which when the king had taken, and at the prophet's direction had laid his hand upon the bow, ready to draw it; the prophet putting his hands upon the king's hands

* 2 Kings. xiii.

(that they might draw the bow together) bid him open the window eastward (towards Syria) and shoot. Which when the king had done, the prophet said, 'The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; for thou (said the prophet to the king) shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek (which signifies strength) until thou hast consumed them.' *

Then the prophet bidding the king take the rest of the arrows (out of the quiver) and smite the ground with them; he did so, but smote but thrice, and staid. At which the prophet was wroth with him, and told him, he should have smitten five or six times, and then he would have smitten the Syrians, till he had consumed them; whereas now he should smite them but thrice.

Yet with that thrice smiting (the Lord being gracious to Israel, and having compassion on them, and respect to them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for the sake of which he would not destroy them, nor cast them from his presence as yet) king Jehoash, after Hazael's death, beating Benhadad, the son of Hazael, in three several battles, recovered from the Syrians the cities of Israel, which had been taken from them by Hazael.

While this was doing, Elisha the prophet died, and was buried; and in a while after, another man being to be buried near to the sepulchre of Elisha, it happened that they who attended that burial spied a band of soldiers coming on towards them (for the Moabites had at that time invaded the land); and being more intent upon their own safety, than the solemnity of the funeral, they, for haste, cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha. But no sooner was the dead man let down, so that he touched the bones of Elisha, but he revived and stood upon his feet. Which miracle, wrought after the prophet's death, seemed to stamp a divine approbation on the prophetick actions of his life.

Soon after Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz, came to the crown of Israel, Amaziah succeeded his father Joash in the kingdom of Judah †. And he, for a while, did that which was right in the sight of the Lord; though not with a perfect heart, nor like his ancestor king David: for, as if he had taken his father Joash for his pattern, he let the high-places remain standing, and suffered the people to offer sacrifice, and burn incense thereon.

* 2 Kings xiii. 2 Chron. xxv. † 2 Kings xiv,

The first public act we read, he did, after he was settled on the throne, was to slay those servants of his that had slain his father. But the children of the murderers he did not slay, having therein regard to the law of Moses, Deut. xxiv. 16: wherein the Lord commanded, 'That the fathers should not be put to death for the children, nor the children for the fathers; but every man for his own offence.'

That piece of justice performed, he gathered the men of Judah together; and having made captains over thousands, and over hundreds, according to the houses of their fathers, throughout all Judah and Benjamin, he numbered them from twenty years old and upwards, and found them three hundred thousand choice men, able to go forth to war, and to handle spear and shield *.

To these he added an hundred thousand mighty men of valour, whom he had hired out of Israel for an hundred talents of silver. And with these intended to march against the Edomites.

But there came a man of God to him, and said, 'O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee, for the Lord is not with Israel, nor with the children of Ephraim.' Then, not finding a readiness in the king to comply with this caution, he added, 'But if (notwithstanding this fair warning) thou wilt go on in thy own will and way, do, make thyself strong for the battle; but God shall make thee fall before the enemy, for God hath power to help, and to cast down.'

This put the king to a stand. Yet considering the charge he had been at, he said to the man of God, 'But if I put off the army of Israel, what shall we do for the hundred talents, which I have given them?' This was a round sum, amounting to thirty-and-seven thousand and five hundred pounds, which the king thought too much to lose. But the man of God, slighting that, told him, 'The Lord was able to give him much more than that.'

Upon this king Amaziah, drawing out his mercenary men that came to him out of Ephraim, sent them home again; and strengthening himself with his own men, led them forth to the valley of Salt. Where setting upon the children of Seir, he smote ten thousand of them, and taking other ten thousand alive, the men of Judah brought them to the top of the rock; and from thence casting them down, they were broken all to pieces.

* 2 Kings xiv. 2 Chron. xxv.

This victory was somewhat abated by a loss the conquerors sustained the mean while. For the Israelitish army, which Amaziah had discharged, consisting of an hundred thousand mighty men of valour, took it so ill that they were sent back, and not suffered to go with him to the battle, that in their return home, they fell furiously upon the cities of Judah all the way they went from Samaria, even to Bethoron, and smiting three thousand of them, carried away much spoil.

But this was not by much the worst that Amaziah suffered by this expedition. For when he returned from the slaughter of the Edomites, he brought along with him the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods; and bowing down himself before them, he burned incense unto them.

For this the anger of the Lord was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent him a prophet, who said unto him, 'Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thy hand?' This was such a rational way of conviction, as one would have thought should have brought the king to a sense of his sin by his folly; but it had not so good an effect upon him. For when the prophet went on with his message to him, the king grew pettish, and said angrily to him, 'Art thou made of the king's counsel? Forbear, why shouldst thou be smitten? (that is, why shouldst thou provoke me to smite thee)?' The prophet then, finding him hardened beyond counsel, forbore pressing it further on him; and only said, 'I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened to his counsel by me.'

It was not long ere this threatened destruction came upon Amaziah, and that by his own means. For being somewhat puffed up with his late victory over the Edomites, and holding himself engaged in honour to revenge the injury lately done him by the Israelitish army, in sacking his cities, he sent a message to Joash king of Israel in these words: 'Come, let us look one another in the face.' Which terms, in those times, imported a challenge to fight; and were here intended not for a duel, or single combat, but for a pitched battle.

King Joash, to shew his contempt of Amaziah, returned him answer in this nipping apologue:

'The thistle that was in Lebanon, sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife,

‘ wife. But there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trod down the thistle. Then he added, Thou sayest (in thy heart at least) Lo, I have smitten the Edomites! and thy heart lifteth thee up to boast. Well, abide at home (and boast there if thou wilt); for why shouldst thou meddle to thy hurt, that thou shouldst fall, and Judah with thee?’

This scornful answer whetted Amaziah the more; seeing himself compared to the thistle, while Joash likened himself to the cedar. So that he would not hearken to any terms of peace, but drew forth his forces to the field. Which indeed God permitted, that he might deliver him and his people into the hand of their enemies, because they had sought after the gods of Edom.

King Joash having also led forth his men, the battle was joined at Bethshemesh (a city belonging to Judah) which signifies, The house of bondage; and so indeed it proved to Amaziah; for Israel prevailing, Judah was put to the worst, and glad to save themselves, who could, by flight.

Amaziah himself being taken prisoner, king Joash brought him along with him to Jerusalem; whither he carried his victorious arms. And being come thither, he brake down the wall of Jerusalem, from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate, four hundred cubits in length; and having taken all the gold and silver, and all the vessels (of value) that were found in the house of God, under the charge of the sons of Obed-Edom, with the treasures of the king’s house, and hostages also, he returned to Samaria, leaving (as it seems) king Amaziah at liberty at Jerusalem.

But though Amaziah lived many years after this, yet we read nothing more of him, save that his people conspiring against him in Jerusalem, he fled for safety to Lachish. But they sending some to Lachish after him, slew him there; and bringing him back to Jerusalem (not with state in his chariot, but) on horses, buried him with his fathers in the city of David.

Joash, king of Israel, was dead fifteen years before, and had for his successor Jeroboam, his son; who, reigning one and forty years, restored in that time the coast of Israel, from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain. To which undertaking he was encouraged by the prophet Jonah, whom the Lord sent to him for that end. For the Lord seeing the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter, and not

willing the name of Israel should be blotted out from under heaven, he saved them by the hands of this Jeroboam the son of Joash; though otherwise he was one that did evil in the sight of the Lord.

To this king's time, it seems, should be referred that great exploit, which (we read in 1 Chron. v. 18, &c.) was performed by the Reubenites, Gadites, and half tribe of Manasseh; who mustering four-and-forty thousand seven hundred and sixty valiant men, skilful in war, and able to use sword and buckler, and to draw the bow, made war upon the Hagarites; and being helped by the Lord (who upon their crying to him in the battle, and putting their trust in him, was intreated of them, and delivered the Hagarites into their hand) gave them a very great defeat, and took from them a large booty of fifty thousand camels, two hundred and fifty thousand sheep, two hundred thousand asses, and one hundred thousand prisoners, besides what were slain, which were many. Thus they prospered, because the war they had was of God; and having dispossessed those Hagarites, they dwelt in their places until the captivity.

THE

B O O K

OF THE

P R O P H E T

J O N A H.

WHEN the prophet Jonah (whom Jerom in his prologue to that prophet's book *, says, the Hebrews affirm to have been that son of the widow of Sarepta whom the prophet Elijah raised from the dead, 1 Kings xvii.) had performed the service he had been sent on to king Jeroboam, and the people of Israel (mentioned before in 2 Kings xiv. 25.) the Lord commanded him to go to Nineveh, to cry against it, because their wickedness was come up before him.

Nineveh, the metropolis then of the Assyrian monarchy, was very ancient, as having been built soon after the flood by Nimrod, great-grandson to Noah (for so interpreters take the words in Gen. x. 11. which has some confirmation from Micah v. 6.) though being afterwards enlarged by Ninus, it took its name from him. It was also a very great city, about four hundred furlongs in compass (as prophane writers report) which with us make fifty miles; and the text delivers

it to be a city of three days journey, chap. iii. 3. And how populous it was may be gathered from there being in it more than fixscore thousand persons, who did not know the right hand from the left, chap. iv. 11. which is generally understood of infants.

To this so ancient, so great, so populous, and withal so wicked a place, * Jonah had no mind to go, especially upon so sharp a message as he had to deliver. Thinking therefore to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, he went down to Joppa, a seaport town, to seek a passage. And having found a ship there, ready to set sail for Tarshish, he paid the fare, and went on board.

But his fear had made him much forget himself, in thinking he could flee from the presence of the Lord. Which, to his cost, he soon found; for the Lord sent forth a great wind, which raised a great tempest in the sea, so that the ship was likely to be broken.

This made the mariners afraid, and fear made them cry every man unto his God. Then bestirring themselves to lighten the ship, by casting forth the wares that were in it into the sea, when to that end they came down into the sides of the ship, there they found Jonah fast asleep.

The shipmaster then rousing him up, said, 'What meanest thou; O sleeper! Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.'

Having got him up, they all agreed to cast lots, that they might know for whose cause this evil was come upon them, and the lot fell upon Jonah. Then said they unto him, 'Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is come upon us. What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? What is thy country? And of what people art thou?' He thereupon telling them that he was an Hebrew, one that feared the Lord God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land, he let them know how he had disobeyed his God, and fled from the presence of the Lord.

When they heard this, the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, 'Why hast thou done this? And what shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us?' For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. 'Take me up, said he to them, and cast me forth into the sea, so

‘ shall the sea be calm unto you; for I know (added he) that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.’

This ingenuous acknowledgment begat in those sailors a compassion towards poor Jonah. And though they had suffered so much by his means, they were very unwilling to throw him over-board. Wherefore they rowed hard to have brought the ship to land. But when they found they could not do it, for that the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them, they cried unto the Lord (the true God, whom Jonah had declared to be his God, the God who made both sea and land, the God whom he had offended); and they said, ‘ We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man’s sake, and lay not upon us innocent blood, if, to save ourselves from perishing, we are obliged to cast him away; for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee.’

Having thus made a sort of excuse to God, and deprecated his displeasure, for what they were necessitated, by a principle of self-preservation, to do to a servant of his; they took up Jonah (not without some reluctance) and cast him into the sea, and the sea thereupon ceased from its raging. But the fear which on this occasion had seized them, together with the sense of their deliverance, was so great, that they offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows.

Though it pleased the Lord to punish Jonah for his disobedience, yet in the midst of his judgment remembering mercy, he had prepared a great fish (which our Saviour tells us was a whale, Matt. xii. 40.) to receive Jonah. And this whale swallowing up Jonah, he was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, and in that respect was an apt type of our blessed Lord, who for the like time was in the belly of the earth, the grave.

While Jonah was in that living prison, and moving dungeon, he prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish’s belly. * And what he then prayed, and how great the exercise of his spirit then was, he himself recounted afterwards, in these words:

‘ I cried, said he, by reason of mine affliction, unto the Lord, and he heard me: out of the belly of the grave cried I, and thou heardest my voice. For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas, and the floods:

‘ compassed me about ; all thy billows, and thy waves passed
 ‘ over me. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet
 ‘ will I look again towards thy holy temple. The waters
 ‘ compassed me about, even to the soul ; the depth closed
 ‘ me round about ; the weeds were wrapped about my head.
 ‘ I went down to the bottom of the mountains ; the earth
 ‘ with her bars was about me for ever. Yet hast thou brought
 ‘ up my life from corruption, O Lord, my God. When
 ‘ my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord, and
 ‘ my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. *
 ‘ They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercy ;
 ‘ but I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thank-
 ‘ giving, I will pay that which I have vowed : salvation
 ‘ is of the Lord.’

Now when Jonah had undergone his three days punish-
 ment in the fish’s belly, the Lord commanded the fish, and
 it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. And Jonah being
 thus, by a warrant from heaven, discharged from his con-
 finement, and set at liberty again, the word of the Lord
 came to him a second time, saying, ‘ Arise, Go unto Ni-
 ‘ neveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching
 ‘ that I bid thee.’

Having smarted for his former disobedience, Jonah stood
 not now to dispute, nor sought to shift the service, but gat
 him away to Nineveh ; and entering a day’s journey into the
 city, he proclaimed, ‘ Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall
 ‘ be overthrown.’

Though this be the substance of the judgment denounced,
 yet it is reasonable to believe that Jonah preached more than
 barely this. Both for conviction, by laying open the sins
 of the Ninevites, to manifest the justice of the judgment
 denounced, and for exhortation, to bring them to repen-
 tance, that they might escape it.

However the event was, that the people of Nineveh be-
 lieved this message to be sent from God ; and proclaiming
 a fast, and putting on sackcloth by the king’s command,
 gave such tokens of sorrow, repentance, and humiliation,
 that God, thereupon repenting of the evil which he had
 threatened to do unto them, did it not.

This proved a new trial and trouble to Jonah, † who
 hereupon discovered another infirmity. He had positively

* Jonah. iii. † Jonah iv.

denounced destruction to Nineveh, and fixed the time. This clemency of God in sparing them, he thought would subject him to the censure of having been a false prophet. He stood upon his reputation, which he doubted would by this means be impaired; and for these reasons it displeased Jonah exceedingly, so that he was very angry, and in a kind of expostulatory prayer, or precatory expostulation, thus spake to the Lord:

‘ I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, while I was yet in my country? Therefore it was, that I fled before unto Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Now therefore, O Lord, take, I beseech thee my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.’

The Lord gave him a gentle reproof, by asking him, ‘ If he did well to be angry.’ Whereupon Jonah went out of the city; and having made him a booth on the east-side thereof, he sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city. For having let in a murmuring discontent, he was so unsettled in his mind, that he knew not what to think, whether God would spare the city or destroy it.

Mean while the Lord, resolving to give Jonah a rational conviction of his partiality to himself, and want of pity to the Ninevites, prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief, which the scorching beams of the sun caused.

What this gourd was, no body that I have met with knows. Many conjectures there are about it, and it has afforded matter for great debate, even in old time; especially between the two fathers (so called) Jerom and Augustine. Jerom, in his Latin translation of the bible, adventured to change the name of this plant; and instead of cucurbita, a gourd, called it hедера, an ivy. This his boldness had like, it seems, to have cost him dear; for not only Augustine fell upon him for it (which provoked him to fall foul upon Augustine again;) but he was fetched up to Rome about it (I take the account out of Calvin’s commentary on this place) and was there accused of sacrilege, as it were, for changing the name of this plant from a gourd to ivy. Whatever name it should go by, no doubt it was a spreading leafy

leafy plant. Whence some have taken it for a wild vine; others for a cucumber, or a pompion, and perhaps it might be the palmetta.

Whatever it was, Jonah was exceeding glad of it; but this joy was short. For early next morning God prepared a worm, which gnawing the gourd made it wither. And when the sun arose, God prepared a vehement east-wind; which, together with the sun, beat so fiercely upon the head of Jonah, that he fainting, not only wished (in himself) that he might die, but said again, 'It is better for me to die than to live.' And when God, expostulating again with him, asked him, 'If he did well to be angry?' he, in a disturbance of mind, answered; 'I do well to be angry, even unto death.'

Then came the conviction upon Jonah. Thou (said the Lord to him) hast had pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night; and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between the right hand and their left, and also much cattle.

As this book of Jonah begins abruptly, with a conjunction copulative, [AND the word of the Lord came to Jonah] (for so it should be read, and in the Bishop's Bible it is, The word of the Lord came ALSO to Jonah) which has made some commentators think, this was but an appendix to some other writing of his, or of some other concerning him; so it ends abruptly also, giving no account what became of the Ninevites, or of Jonah himself after this.

T H E
B O O K
O F
A M O S.

WHILE Jonah was thus exercised at Nineveh, the prophet Amos * was employed among the Israelites. He was an herdsman belonging to Tekoa, a town in Judea, not far from Jerusalem (the same place from which Joab fetched that wise woman, whom he employed to work king David to recall his son Absalom from banishment, 2 Sam. xiv. 2).

He dates the beginning of his prophecy from two years before the earthquake. Of which we have not any account, that I remember, in the Holy Scriptures, unless it be in a transient passage in the book of Zechariah (a succeeding prophet) who, in chap. xiv. 5. mentions an earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, who was contemporary with Jeroboam the second son of Joash king of Israel; under whom, and towards the latter end of whose reign, this prophet Amos prophesied.

Though by birth and habitation he was of Judah, yet he prophesied in Israel, and chiefly concerning Israel. First, against the enemies of Israel, the Syrians, the Philistines, the Tyrians, the Edomites, the Ammonites, and the Moabites, every one distinctly, in the first chapter and beginning of the second, denouncing to each their judgment, and the cause

* Amos i. A. M. 3198.

thereof. And by a particular form of speech [viz. For three transgressions and for four] used alike to them all, he shews it was not for a few offences that those judgments were denounced; but that they had run on in a course of sinning, and had provoked the Lord to the height. Then turning to Judah and Israel, he treats them in the same stile, but spends the greatest part of his book upon Israel, which at that time was by much the worst of the two.

But because to analyse this, and the rest of the prophets, as in course they fall in the way, would both too much swell the bulk of this book, and too much break and discontinue the thread of the history, I shall only touch those passages here, which seem to be historical.

The prophet having denounced great judgments against Israel in general, as of famine, fire, sword, captivity, &c. and against the house of Jeroboam in particular, saying, 'I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword,' chap. vii. 9. Amaziah, the idolatrous priest of Bethel (hating, and contriving destruction to Amos, as generally the false prophets do to the true) drew up a charge of high treason against him, and sent it to the king, saying, 'Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus (said he) Amos saith, 'Jeroboam shall die by the sword.'

This was not only an envious, but a false charge*; for Amos did not say Jeroboam (himself) should die by the sword; neither did he so die (see 2 Kings xiv. 29). But speaking in the person of God, he said, 'I will rise against the house (that is, the posterity) of Jeroboam with the sword,' Amos vii. 9. which was fulfilled on Zechariah, the son of this Jeroboam, 2 Kings xv. 10.

But lest this accusation should not take place with the king, the wicked priest attempted to frighten the prophet, and make him fly the country.

'O thou seer (said he to Amos) Go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there. But prophesy not again any more at Bethel (where one of the idol-calves was set up); for it is not only the king's chapel, but the king's court too.'

To this insulting charge the gentle prophet, Amos, mildly answered, 'I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son,

* Amos vii.

• (as if he had said, I was not bred at the university, nor
 • trained up at school, to be made a prophet; neither was I
 • a prophet by succession, nor yet did I take up the employ-
 • ment as a trade for a livelihood). But I was an herdsman,
 • and gathered sycamore fruit (or wild figs) for my living.
 • And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord
 • said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. Now,
 • therefore (added he, his spirit rising in somewhat an higher
 • strain, from a sense of this idolatrous priest's presumption,
 • in taking upon him to countermand his commission) Thou
 • that sayest, Prophecy not against Israel, hear thou the word
 • of the Lord: Thus saith the Lord, T'hy wife shall be an
 • harlot in the city, and thy sons, and thy daughters shall fall
 • by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line, and thou
 • shalt die in a polluted land, and Israel shall surely go into
 • captivity forth of this land.'

What was the issue of this contest, between this envious
 priest and the good prophet Amos, doth not appear; nor
 do I find any mention of him in any other place of the holy
 text.

CONTEMPORARY with Amos was the prophet Hosea, who under this Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel, began also to prophesy; but is near the end of his reign, that the greatest part of his prophecies fall under the reigns of his successors, even to the time when Israel was carried into captivity. For though no more of the kings of Israel are named in his prophecy, but the Jeroboam, under whom he began to exercise the prophetic function, yet he continued to prophesy in the reigns of Izabab, Zecharia, and of Shallum (who was contemporary with the Jeroboam), and of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah; in the ninth year of whose reign that captivity began, a King, viz. 10. Of whom, in several parts of his prophecies, this holy prophet foretold the fall.

And indeed, the book of Hosea contains expostulations between God and his people; expressions of their ingratitude for benefits received; and suggestions of reproofs for their idolatry and manifold sins; admonitions to repent, and thus to the Lord; commendations of His mercy; of great judg-

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T H E

B O O K

O F

H O S E A.

CONTEMPORARY with Amos was the prophet Hosea*, who under this Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel, began also to prophesy; but so near the end of his reign, that the greatest part of his prophecies fall under the reigns of his successors, even to the time wherein Israel was carried into captivity. For though no more of the kings of Israel are named in his prophecy, but this Jeroboam, under whom he began to exercise the prophetic function, yet he continued to prophesy in the reigns of four kings of Judah, viz. of Uzziah (who was contemporary with this Jeroboam) and of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah; in the sixth year of whose reign that captivity began, 2 Kings xviii. 10. Of which, in several parts of his prophecies, this holy prophet forewarned them.

And indeed, the book of Hosea contains expostulations between God and his people; exprobrations of their ingratitude for benefits received; objurgations or reproofs for their idolatries and manifold sins; admonitions to repent, and turn to the Lord; comminations or threatnings of great judg-

* Hosea i. A. M. 3200.

ments and punishments, if they repented not; with gracious promises of pardon and acceptance, if they did repent, amend, and heartily return to the Lord.

But no part of it being historical, I shall only note to the reader, that as it relates to, and treats of the times of the kings of Israel, from the latter part of the reign of Jeroboam the second, to the time of the captivity of the ten tribes by Salmanezer; and from the latter part of the reign of Uzziah, through the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz, and into the beginning of the reign of Hezekiah, kings of Judah: so it may with best understanding, and to most advantage, be read along with the histories of those times, which are related in the 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18th chapters of the second book of the Kings; and in the 16, 17, and 18th chapters of the second book of the Chronicles.

THE
B O O K
O F
J O E L.

ABOUT this time also, *i. e.* about the time of Jeroboam the second, it is supposed, the prophet Joel lived and prophesied*, or a little after; for some refer him to the time of Uzziah, others to the time of Hezekiah, kings of Judah. And perhaps he might prophesy under both, as did Hosea and Isaiah, with whom it is thought he was contemporary.

As his prophecy is generally held to relate to the Jews (that is, the house of Judah only); so the general scope of it is to set forth in the most sensible manner, the grievous judgments that either were then already come, or were at hand ready to come upon them from the Lord, in order to bring them to a due sense of their sinful estate, to an hearty sorrow for it, and true repentance of it; with direction how to manifest their repentance; and assurance, that if they did so, the Lord would yet be gracious to them; and would not only remove the famine they suffered under (by removing the drought that had caused it, and sending rain, which would produce plenty of good things for them); but would ease them also of the fears they were in, by removing from them

* Joel i. A. M. 3200.

the northern army, which probably might be that of Sennacherib, the haughty king of Assyria, who, by Rabshakah, sent them such threatening messages in king Hezekiah's time.

But eminently remarkable and exceeding precious are those parts of his prophecy, which point at the glory of the gospel-times, wherein (amongst other blessings) is promised the general pouring forth of the Spirit of God upon all flesh, in all degrees and stations of men, whether high or low, bond or free, male or female; the effects of which should appear in their sons and daughters prophesying, Joel ii. 28, 29. Which the apostle Peter, long after, yet in the beginning of the Christian church, applied to that great effusion of the Spirit upon the apostles, and the rest of the believers assembled at Jerusalem soon after the ascension of our blessed Lord, Acts ii. 16, &c.

Having thus given these brief accounts of such of the holy prophets as have fallen into this part of our history, let us now return to the kings again, under whom they prophesied; and leaving the second Jeroboam still sitting on the throne of Israel, let us go on a while with the succession of the kings of Judah. *

After the death of king Amaziah, who (as is noted before) was slain by his own subjects at Lachish †, 2 Kings xiv. 19. all the people of Judah took Azariah (called otherwise Uzziah, 2 Chron. xxvi. 1.) and made him king in his father's stead.

The first public act of his, that we read of, was the building (or perhaps rebuilding rather) of Eloth, or Elath, a city near the Red-sea, which he had recovered to Judah. Afterwards he went forth, and warred against the Philistines; and having dismantled Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod, cities of prime note in Philistia (by breaking down their walls) he built cities about Ashdod, and in other places among the Philistines. For God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians, and the Nehunims (supposed to be remainders of the Canaanites) and against the Ammonites also; who, as a token of subjection, gave him gifts, so that his name spread abroad, even as far as Egypt.

And indeed, he had greatly strengthened himself. For he had an host of three hundred and seven thousand and five hundred fighting men, well armed with shields and spears,

* 2 Kings xv. † 2 Chron. xxvi.

and helmets, and habergeons, bows and arrows, and slings to cast stones. And over this host, two thousand and six hundred of the chief of the fathers, mighty men of valour, were the principal commanders. Then for fortifications, he built towers in several parts of Jerusalem; upon which, and upon the bulwarks, he planted engines, invented by cunning men, to shoot arrows and stones withal.

He built towers in the desert also, and digged many wells; which probably he did for the accommodation and safety of his servants and cattle, for he had much cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains; husbandmen also, and vine-dressers, as well in the mountains, as in the fruitful fields, for he loved husbandry.

In his youth, and during the greatest part of his reign, so long at least as Zechariah lived (who had understanding in the visions of God) he sought God, and did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. And as long as he sought the Lord, the Lord made him to prosper, and helped him; so that he grew marvellous strong. But prosperity hurt him; for when he was become strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction, and he transgressed against the Lord his God; for he would needs go into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar.

Which when Azariah, the priest saw, he went in after him, with fourscore priests of the Lord, that were valiant men*, and withstood Uzziah the king, telling him, it did not belong to him (though he was their king) to burn incense to the Lord; but to the priests, the sons of Aaron, who were consecrated to that service. Wherefore they bid him go out of the sanctuary: letting him know, that he had transgressed in coming there, and that what he had done should not be for his honour from the Lord God.

The king had a censer in his hand, ready to burn incense, when he received this repulse from the priests; and his high spirit not brooking to be so treated by his subjects, he grew wroth with the priests. But while in his anger he stood contending with them, the leprosy rose up in his forehead*. Which the priests observing, they thrust him out of the house of the Lord: yea, he himself hastened to get out, being sensible that the Lord had smitten him.

Nor did he ever recover of this disease, but was a leper to his dying day, and dwelt apart in a distinct house as a leper;

* 2 Kings xv.

for he was cut off from having any access to the house of the Lord, and Jotham his son, as vice-roy, was over the king's house, and administered justice to the people of the land * during the remainder of the king's life.

At length this leprous king died, after a reign of two and fifty years, and was buried with his fathers; that is, in the same field wherein the royal sepulchres were, but at some distance from them, because he was a leper.

As the prophets Jonah, Amos, Hosea, and Joel, began their prophecies under Jeroboam king of Israel, and this Uzziah king of Judah; so the noble prophet Isaiah (noble by birth, as being of the blood royal, and more ennobled by his prophetic gift, especially after the holy seraphim had touched his lips with a live coal taken from the altar) began to prophesy under this king Uzziah; but towards the latter end of his reign, after he for his leprosy lived privately, and Jotham his son ruled for him. Within the compass of which time the first six chapters of Isaiah's prophecy seem to have been written: and the last of them expressly in the year that king Uzziah died.

When Uzziah was dead *, his son Jotham, who before had ruled only as *pro-rex*, reigned as king for sixteen years, doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord, as his father Uzziah had done; whose great miscarriage was his presumption in entering into the sanctuary of the Lord, and attempting to offer incense there: which therefore his son Jotham, taking warning by his harm, warily abstained from, 2 Chron. xxvii. 1, 2. But the body of the people yet acted corruptly, for the high-places not being removed, they still sacrificed and burnt incense there.

Amongst other public acts, Jotham built the high-gate of the house of the Lord; and besides what he built on the wall of the tower (which was not a little) he built cities in the mountains of Judah, and in the forests he built castles and towers.

Neither was he unsuccessful in his wars; for beside the trouble he had from the kings of Syria and Israel, he fought with the Ammonites, and prevailed against them; so that for several years they paid him yearly an hundred talents of silver, ten thousand measures of wheat, and as much of barley, of that measure which is called a *cor*, which is computed to contain five bushels and five gallons.

* A. M. 3250.

THE
- B O O K
O F
M I C A H.

IN the time of this king Jotham began the prophet Micah to prophesy * ; and continued through his reign, and the reigns of his son and grandson, Ahāz and Hezekiah. Together with the histories of these kings, and of their contemporary kings of Israel, his prophecy will be read most advantageously. For it relates to both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, denouncing great judgments unto them, for their many and great transgressions therein set forth; intermingling sometimes some comfortable promises of deliverance and restoration, to bear them up from utterly fainting under the exercises they should meet withal.

Let us now, leaving Jotham on the throne of Judah, observe with what a swift motion the wheel of government whirled round in the kingdom of Israel.

Jeroboam the son of Joash being dead, 2 Kings xiv. 29. his son Zechariah succeeded to the crown of Israel †, in the eight-and-thirtieth year of Uzziah king of Judah. But as he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as his fathers had done (not departing from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the calvish idols, whereby he made Israel to sin); so he enjoyed the crown but a little while.

* Micah i. A. M. 3260. † 2 Kings xv. 2.

For at the end of six months, Shallum the son of Jabeſh conſpiring againſt him, ſmote him before the people; and having ſlain him, reigned in his ſtead.

This Zechariah was the fourth from Jehu, and the laſt king of his race; in whom was fulfilled that gracious promiſe, which the Lord was pleaſed to make to Jehu, as a reward for his courage, zeal, and diligence, in executing the judgment which God had commanded him to execute upon the houſe of Ahab; that he and his ſeed ſhould ſit on the throne of Iſrael unto the fourth generation.

But the meaſure which Shallum meaſured to Zechariah was meaſured to him again, with this difference, that whereas Zechariah reigned ſix months, Shallum reigned but one. For Menahem the ſon of Gadi, going up from Tirzah to Samaria, ſmote Shallum there; and having ſlain him, poſſeſſed himſelf of the kingdom.

For an account of the reſt of the acts of theſe three kings, Zechariah, Shallum, and Menahem, we are referred to the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Iſrael; of whom yet no mention is made, ſo much as by name, in either of thoſe books of Chronicles which we have. Which makes it ſtill more evident, that that book, ſo often referred to, is loſt.

As ſoon as Menahem was ſettled on the throne, he ſmote Tiphſah (a city of Iſrael) and all that were therein, and in the coaſts thereof, becauſe they did not open their gates to receive him, or declare for him. And ſo inhumanly barbarous was he, that when he had taken the place, he ripped up all the women therein that were with child.

Theſe were very bloody times, wherein violence, murders, rapines, and all manner of immoralities, as well as ſuperſtitious and idolatries, reigned; for all the kings of Iſrael, from Jehu, did evil in the ſight of the Lord. So that there was abundant matter for the prophets [Hoſea, Amos, Micah, yea, and Iſaiah too] to declaim againſt.

But when the admonitions, reproofs, and threatenings by the prophets, did not prevail to reclaim the people, the Lord ſtirred up the ſpirit of Pul, king of Aſſyria (whom ſome take to be that king of Nineveh, then the chief city of the Aſſyrian monarchy, who is ſaid to have repented at the preaching of Jonah) to come up againſt the land, 1 Chron. v. 26. Which when Menahem, Iſrael's new king, underſtood, he politicly ſtooped to Pul; and making him a preſent

sent of a thousand talents of silver (three hundred seventy-five thousand pounds) which he raised out of all the wealthy men of Israel, exacting from each man fifty shekels; he thereby prevailed with king Pul not only to withdraw his forces out of the land, but before he went, to confirm the kingdom in his hand.

By this means he possessed the crown ten years, and then dying, left it to Pekahiah his son, who kept it but two years. For he following the steps of his father, who did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walking in the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat; Pekah, a captain of his, entering into a conspiracy against him, with Argob and Arieah, and fifty men of the Gileadites, smote him in the king's palace in Samaria; and having slain him, reigned in his stead. But he too, like the rest that went before him, did evil in the sight of the Lord, not departing from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

In the seventeenth year of Pekah's reign, Jotham king of Judah dying, Ahaz his son ascended the throne of that kingdom, * and proved a very wicked king. For he not only did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord, like his ancestor king David; but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, even the worst of them. For he made molten images for Baalim (the whole herd of lesser gods worshipped by the heathen). He sacrificed, and burnt incense in the high-places, and on the hills, and under every green tree. Nay he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom (a place not far from Jerusalem) and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord had cast out from before the children of Israel.

This passing through the fire, interpreters say, was done either by causing the child to pass to Molech between two fires, made near one to the other for that purpose, whereby the child was not killed, but consecrated to that idol; or by shutting up the child in the body of that idol, which was made of brass, in the shape of a man (save that the head was like the head of an ox) so great in bulk, that his body was divided or parted within into seven distinct chapels or cells, into one of which the child to be sacrificed being put, was burnt to death by the heat, which a

* 2 Kings ii. A. M. 3267.

fire from without sent in through the brass. And that the shrieks and outcries of the children, thus tormented, might not be heard by the parents, or others standing by, drums mean while were beaten; from whence the place was called Tophet, which signifies a drum, as Marius d'Assigny tells us in his History of the Heathen Gods, book iii. p. 21, 22. And probable it is that so Ahaz his son (or children) was served: for whereas the text in Kings says, 'He made his son to pass through the fire;' the text in Chronicles hath it, 'He burnt his children in the fire.'

For these so many and so great abominations, the Lord punished Ahaz and Judah by the kings of Syria and of Israel. But here arises some disagreement in the story, as it is related in the book of the Kings, and in the book of the Chronicles.

For in 2 Chron. xxviii. 5, &c. we read, That the Lord delivered Ahaz into the hand of the king of Syria, who smote him, and carried away a great multitude of his people captives to Damascus. And that he was delivered also into the hand of Pekah king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter; slaying in one day an hundred and twenty thousand valiant men of Judah, and carrying away captives to Samaria two hundred thousand women and children, with much spoil.

On the other hand, in 2 Kings xvi. 5. it is said, That Rezin king of Syria, and Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to war: and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him. The same account also we have of it by the prophet Isaiah* where he says expressly, 'That in the days of this king Ahaz, Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel, went up towards Jerusalem, to war against it, but could not prevail against it.'

To accommodate this diversity in the relation, let us suppose, either that the account given of this matter in the book of the Kings, and by the prophet Isaiah, related to one time, and that which is given in the book of Chronicles to another; or, that those two kings of Syria and Israel, though with their joint forces they did besiege Jerusalem, could not take the city, but were forced to raise their siege, and then committed those other hostilities, whereby they

* Isaiah.

slew and took captive so many, in other parts of the kingdom.

For there seems to be no ground for suspicion of any mistake of the scribe in either place; the text in Kings, and in the prophecy of Isaiah agreeing, though not written by the same hand. And although the account is given but short and naked in the book of Kings, yet in the prophecy of Isaiah it is set forth at large, with many confirming circumstances. And so is the other relation also, which is given 2 Chron. xxviii.

With respect to the siege of Jerusalem, the prophet Isaiah sets forth, That when Ahaz and his people quivered for fear, at the report of the two kings of Syria and Israel coming with united forces against them, the Lord sent him forth to meet Ahaz, and to bid him take heed and be quiet, and not fear, nor be faint-hearted, because of the two tails of those smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah (who was Pekah, king of Israel) for though, said he, they have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, 'Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set up a king (of our own making) in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal (uncertain whom, or whence: some think a Syrian, others an Israelite); yet thus saith the Lord, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son (Pekah.) But within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people.'

Nor is the relation of the many prisoners, which the Israelites took of Judah, and carried captive with the spoil to Samaria, less supported with remarkable circumstances.

For we read in 2 Chron. xxviii. that when they brought in their captives to Samaria, a prophet of the Lord, whose name was Oded, went out to them, and thus reproved the Israelitish army, both for the slaughter they had made, and the prisoners they had taken:

'Behold, said he, because the Lord God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage, that reacheth up unto heaven. And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem, for bondmen and bondwomen

‘bondwomen unto you. But are there not even with you
 ‘also sins against the Lord your God? Now therefore, hear
 ‘ye me, and deliver the prisoners again which ye have
 ‘taken captive of your brethren; for the fierce wrath of
 ‘God is upon you.’

This stirred certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim (who are here put for Israel) to stand up against them that came from the war, and say to them, ‘Ye shall not bring
 ‘the captives hither: for whereas we have offended against
 ‘the Lord, ye go the way to add more to our sins, and
 ‘to our trespasss, which is so great already, that there is
 ‘fierce wrath against Israel.’

The soldiers thereupon leaving both the captives and the spoil before the princes and the congregation, the principal rulers took the captives; and having with the spoil clothed and shod all such of them as had been stripped by the soldiers, they gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them (dressing the wounds of such of them as were hurt;) and setting the feeble of them upon asses, brought them to Jericho to their brethren, themselves returning to Samaria.

However it was, this is evident, that although the Lord had by his prophet assured Ahaz, that the Syrians with Israel should not prevail to take the city Jerusalem, and offered to confirm it to him by whatsoever sign he would ask; yet would not that stubborn king ask any sign (under an hypocritical pretence, that he would not tempt God); neither yet would he trust to the Lord for preservation and deliverance. But he sent to the king of Assyria to come and help him; and to induce him thereunto, sent him for a present the silver and the gold that was found in the house of the Lord and in the king’s treasury; offering to become a tributary to him, and giving his ambassadors in charge to say to the Assyrian monarch in his name, ‘I
 ‘am thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out
 ‘of the hand of the king of Syria, and of the king of
 ‘Israel, which rise up against me.’

Tiglath-pileser, the then king of Assyria (called also Tilgath-pilnefer, 2 Chron. xxviii. 20.) was not backward to come. Yet before he could come, Rezin king of Syria had recovered from Judah the city Elath, which king Uzziah, grandfather of Ahaz, had taken from the Syrians, and driving the Jews from thence, replanted his Syrians therein.

But when Tiglath-pileser was come, he made short work with Rezin*, for drawing up his army against Damascus, he took it; and having slain king Rezin, he carried away the people of Damascus captives to Kir; which Tremellius takes to be a city or place in Media, subject to the Assyrian monarchy, and from thence called afterwards Syromedia. And herein Tilgath-pileser answered his name, which signifies, He hath taken away a marvellous captivity.

This spoiling of Damascus the prophet Isaiah foresaw and foretold, not only in some darker passages in the seventh chapter of his prophecy, but openly and directly in the eighth chapter. Where having typically represented his going in unto his wife, she thereupon conceiving, and bearing a son, whose name he called Maher-shalal-hashbaz (that is, In making speed to the spoil, he hasteneth the prey) and his recording all this by God's command in a great roll, before sufficient witnesses; he told them expressly, that before that child should have knowledge to cry, 'My father and my mother,' the riches of Damascus, and the spoil of Samaria, shall be taken away before the king of Assyria, Isa. viii. 4. And although he joins there the spoil of Samaria with that of Damascus, the sequel of the story will shortly shew the completing of that also. And as he there foretold it just before it came, so in the seventeenth chapter of his prophecy he speaks of it again as come.

Nor did Isaiah only foreshew this stroke upon Damascus; but his contemporary, the prophet Amos, that poor, plain herdsman, foretold it in direct terms. These are his words: 'Thus saith the Lord, For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they threshed Gilead (a part of the country of Israel) with threshing instruments of iron; but I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad (two kings of Syria, father and son, great oppressors of Israel). I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden; and the people of Syria (for those three places, Damascus, Aven, and Eden, are taken to comprehend the whole kingdom of Syria) shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the Lord,' Amos i. 3, &c. see also chap. iii. 12.

* A. M. 3272.

When king Ahaz understood that the Assyrian king was come to Damascus, he hastened thither to him. And being there, he saw an altar, which, for the form thereof, much pleased him: wherefore causing a pattern of it to be exactly taken, he sent it to Urijah the priest at Jerusalem, for him to make such another by it. The priest (instead of instructing the king better, as his office required) being, it seems, an hypocritical time-server, built an altar by that pattern, against king Ahaz came back from Damascus.

Now when the king, being returned, found this new altar ready, he not only offered thereon, but caused the altar of the Lord (the brazen altar which stood before the Lord) to be brought from the fore front of the house of the Lord, and (that it might not stand between his altar and the house of the Lord) he set it on the north side of this altar of his, commanding Urijah the priest to offer all the burnt-offerings at this altar, and reserve the brazen altar for him to inquire of the Lord by. And that temporizing priest did all this just as the king commanded him.

Nor was this the only innovation that Ahaz made in the things belonging to the worship of God. But he also cut off the borders of the bases (mentioned in 1 Kings vii. 27, &c.) and removed the laver from off them, ver. 38. and took down the sea from off the brazen oxen, ver. 23. and set it upon a pavement of stones. The covert also for the sabbath (which was built to receive and shelter the priests that attended from sabbath to sabbath) together with the king's entry, turned he from the house of the Lord, because of the king of Assyria. Which is taken to have been done, either in flattery, to please the king of Assyria, by shewing him how little he regarded the ordinances of the Lord; or else for fear of the king of Assyria, and to secure himself, in case the king of Assyria would assail him also, which he had some reason to doubt. For though the king of Assyria, at his request, came and smote his enemies, yet he did no otherwise help him: nay, he is said to have distressed him, but not strengthened him. 2 Chron. xxviii. 20.

And indeed, if the Assyrian had then come on against Ahaz, he was but in an ill condition to have withstood him. For because of his sore transgressions, whereby he had made Judah naked, the Lord had brought Judah low. For on the one hand, the Edomites had come again, and smitten Judah,

and carried away captives; on the other hand, the Philistines invading the cities of the low-country, and of the south of Judah, had taken many cities, with their villages, and seated themselves therein.

But though Ahaz was thus distressed, yet did he still trespass the more against the Lord. For he not only set up an altar of the heathenish fashion, but he sacrificed also unto the gods of Damascus which had smitten him. This he did, to make them propitious to him. For, said he, 'Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, I will sacrifice to them, that they may help me:' but they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel; where Israel is set for Judah.

Besides all this, he gathered together the vessels of the house of the Lord, and cut them to pieces, and then shutting up the doors of the house of the Lord, he made altars in every corner of Jerusalem; and in all the several cities of Judah he made high-places, to burn incense in unto other gods, so provoking to anger the Lord God of his fathers.

At length, having reigned sixteen years, he died, and was buried in the city of Jerusalem; but they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings.

But Ahaz lived to see Pekah king of Israel (who had joined with Rezin king of Syria against him) distressed as well as himself. For Tiglath-pileser, the Assyrian king, having spoiled Damascus, the metropolis of Syria, fell upon Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, Janoah and Kedish, Hazor, Gilead and Galilee, and all the land of Naphtali (cities and countries belonging to Israel) and carried the inhabitants captive to Assyria. This perhaps might give encouragement to Hoshea, the son of Elah, to conspire against Pekah; for quickly after this he slew him, and reigned in his stead.

Hoshea took the kingdom with all its incumbrances*, which by this time were grown to be many and great. For though he himself passed in the middle rank of the bad kings, doing evil in the sight of the Lord; but not as some of the kings of Israel that had been before him; yet the kings his predecessors, with the body of the people, having through a long series of time gone on in a course of disobedience and rebellion against the Lord, slighting the admonitions, and disregarding the threatenings of the Lord by his prophets, had so highly provoked the Lord, that now he sent the king

of Assyria, whom he called the rod of his anger, Isa. x. 5. to call them to an account. So that Hoshea was scarce settled on the throne, when Salmaneser, the Assyrian king, came up against him.

Hoshea, for that time, pacified him with submission, submitting himself to him as a tributary prince, and making him ample presents. But this served not long. For after a while, Hoshea neglected to pay his tribute, and withal tampered with So, king of Egypt, to assist him to cast off the Assyrian yoke, which he had so lately taken on him. Which when Salmaneser understood, he came up with his forces through all the land, and laid siege to Samaria.

Three years Samaria held out the siege, before the Assyrian could take it.* But at the three years end (which was the ninth year of Hoshea) Salmaneser took Samaria, and shutting up king Hoshea in prison, and in bonds, he carried Israel away captives into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor, by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. Among these captives, Tobit, then a young man, was one, whose story hath a distinct book in the Apocrypha.

Thus were the ten tribes dispossessed of the land of Canaan, the land promised to Israel their father, whose name they bore. And that the justice of God may appear in thus disinheriting them, the cause is set forth, with great amplification, in this 17th chapter of the second book of Kings, from ver. 7. to 24. But is contracted into this brief sum, chap. xviii. 12. 'Because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses, the servant of the Lord, had commanded; and would not hear them, nor do them.'

All the prophets of God, who prophesied in those times, foretold this captivity. As the prophet Isaiah, chap. viii. 4. and chap. ix. 9. to the end. The prophet Hosea, chap. viii. ver. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and chap. x. ver. 5, 6, 7. 14, 15. and chap. xiii. 16. The prophet Amos, chap. iii. 9. to the end; chap. v. 2, 3. 5. vi. 7. and vii. 17. And the prophet Micah, chap. i. 5, 6, &c. and chap. ii. 3, 4, &c.

The Israelites being thus carried out of their own land into Assyria, the Assyrian king drew forth divers colonies of his people from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Sepharvaim (places belonging to that monarchy) and sending them into the land of Canaan, placed them in the

cities of Samaria, instead of the children of Israel; and they possessing Samaria, dwelt in the cities thereof.

This re-peopling of Samaria, and the other cities of Israel, is ascribed to Esarhaddon, Esra iv. 2. But he being the grandson of Salmaneser, by whom the country was depopulated, it may be considered whether it be probable the country lay waste, and uninhabited, for so many years as were between the grandfather and grandson; and whether they who were sent by Esarhaddon might not be a second colony.

However, they who came first, at their first coming to dwell there, met with but rough entertainment. For not fearing the Lord (that is, not performing any sort of worship to him, but polluting the holy land with their several sorts of foul idolatries) the Lord sent lions among them, which slew many of them.

This struck such terror on the rest, that they sent messengers to the king of Assyria, to complain of this grievance; who acquainted him, that the nations which he had removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, were infested, and many of them slain by lions, which the God of the land had sent among them, because they, not knowing the manner how that God used to be served, had not performed any worship to him.

The king thereupon, that he might provide for the safety of the people, gave order that one of the priests, that had been brought with the other captives out of the land of Israel, should be carried back thither again, that he might dwell there, and teach these new inhabitants the manner or way of worship of the God of the land.

Notwithstanding which, as the colonies consisted of a medley of divers sorts of people drawn out of several provinces and nations*; so every nation of them made gods of their own (according to the manner of the place they came from) and put them in the houses of the high places, which the Israelites (called here the Samaritans, because Samaria was the metropolis, or chief city of that kingdom) had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt.

For the men that came from Babylon set up Succoth-benoth for their god; which Godwyn tells us, from the Hebrew doctors, was the picture of an hen with her chickens. Moses and Aaron, l. iv. c. 7.

They that came from Cuth (or Cutharth) made Nergal their god: which Godwyn (*ubi supra*) says, the Hebrew

* 2 Kings xvii.

doctors interpret, *Gallum sylvestrem*; and Wilson calls it a woodcock. Christian Dictionary, *verbo Nergal*. But D'Afigny says, *Nergal* was a continual fire. Hist. of the Heathen Gods, book first, p. 103.

The men of Hamath set up Ashima for their god, represented by a goat. Godwyn, *ubi supra*.

The Avites had two; Nibhaz, supposed to be the same with Anubis, which the Egyptians worshipped in the image of a dog; and Tartak, in the form of an ass. Godwyn, *ib.*

They that came from Sepharavim had two also; Adramelech and Anamelech. Which Godwyn (*ubi supra*) says, had the representation, the former of a mule, the latter of an horse. But because the Sepharavites are here said to burn their children in the fire to these gods of theirs, some have thence conjectured, that these two idols were the same with Moloch (or Molech) whose name they have assumed. Hist. of Heathen Gods, l. i. p. 92.

That these contemptible gods might not want suitable attendants, these new planters made to themselves, of the lowest amongst them, priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them there. And thus they patched up a mongrel religion, fearing the Lord (that is, pretending to worship him) yet serving their own gods; paying indifferently their devotions to Bethel's calf, and their own idols, with the same rites, and after the same manner, as the Israelites had formerly done, according as they were instructed by their Israelitish, but apostate, priests.

But as for the Israelites who were gone into captivity, all their afflictions and distresses, even this last and greatest of perpetual bondage, did not reclaim them; but they went on in their accustomed evil courses, not fearing the Lord, nor doing nor keeping the statutes, ordinances, law, and commandment, which the Lord had given to the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel.

This was the end of the Israelitish kingdom; that is, of the ten tribes which revolted from Rehoboam the son of Solomon, and set up Jeroboam the son of Nebat against him. And this was the beginning and rise of that mongrel-people, who (from the city and country of Samaria, where they lived) were afterwards called Samaritans; enemies to the Jews, and, as such, rejected by them.

But Judah's day was yet somewhat lengthened. For though Ahaz (the last of her kings that we have yet mentioned) had

had by his egregious wickedness drawn her judgment somewhat forward; yet his son and successor, Hezekiah (a good son of an evil father) by his obedient and humble walking with the Lord, may be thought to have for a while protracted it. For he is said to have done that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his ancestor David did.

He began early to give evidence of his zeal for God, and for the true worship of God. * For in the first year of his reign (which was the five-and-twentieth of his age) and in the first month of the year, he caused the doors of the house of the Lord (which his father had shut up, 2 Chron. xxviii. 24.) to be opened and repaired. Then having gathered the priests and the Levites together, he gave them in charge, first to sanctify themselves, and then to sanctify the house of the Lord God of their fathers, by carrying the filthiness out of the holy place. 'For, said he, our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the sight of the Lord our God, and have forsaken him, and turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord, and have even turned their backs upon it. They have also shut up the doors of the porch, and have put out the lamps, and have not burned incense, nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel. Wherefore the wrath of the Lord was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them into their enemies hands, as ye have seen. For our fathers, ye know, have fallen by the sword, and our wives and children were in captivity for this.' Wherein it is probable he had an eye to the slaughter, which Pekah, late king of Israel, had made of the men of Judah, and the great number of prisoners taken in the time of king Ahaz his father, 2 Chron. xxviii. 6. and 8.

Then going on he tells them, 'Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us. Now therefore my sons (said he) be not negligent; for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before him, that ye may serve him, and minister unto him, and burn incense before him.'

The Levites and the priests, thus authorised and encouraged, gathered their brethren together, and, having sancti-

* 2 Kings xviii.

2 Chron. xxix.

fied themselves, came, according to the commandment of the king, to do the Lord's business, in cleansing the house of the Lord. And the priests, going into the inner part, brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the Lord to the Levites; who taking it of them, carried it out abroad, and cast it into the brook Kidron (a rivulet which ran in the valley between Jerusalem and the mount of Olives, and in the New Testament is called Cedron, John xviii. 1.) And such diligence they did use therein, that beginning on the first day of the first month, they came on the eighth day to the porch of the Lord. And having in eight days cleansed the house of the Lord, they cleansed the outward court in eight days more; so that by the sixteenth day of the same month they had made a full end.

Having then reported to king Hezekiah that they had cleansed all the house of the Lord, and the altar of burnt-offering, and the shew-bread table, with all the vessels belonging to each; and moreover, that they had looked up all the vessels, which his father king Ahaz had cast away in his transgression, and had prepared and sanctified them, and set them before the altar of the Lord; the king, with his rulers, went early up to the house of the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings and sacrifices in such abundance, that the priests were too few to slay them, and were glad to accept the help of their brethren the Levites (who were more upright, and forward to sanctify themselves, than were the priests) until the work was ended, and till more of the priests had sanctified themselves. And thus was the service of the house of the Lord set in order, to the mutual rejoicing of both king and people.

The way being thus fairly opened to a thorough reformation, and so good a progress made therein, the next step was the keeping of the passover: which by reason of the division of the kingdom, and the frequent commotions, * disturbances, and troubles that happened thereupon, had not been kept in due manner for a long time. But now, the king having advised with his princes about it, it was determined, that since it could not be kept in that first month (which was the regular time for it) because neither had the priests yet sanctified a sufficient number of themselves

* 2 Kings xviii. 2 Chron. xxx.

for the work, nor could the people have timely notice to assemble themselves together at Jerusalem to it; it should be kept in the second month, and proclamation thereof should be made from Beersheba even unto Dan (the whole length of the land of Judea;) that so not only the two tribes of the kingdom of Judah, but all such also of the ten tribes of Israel, as, having escaped the hands of the kings of Assyria, were not gone into captivity (for the Assyrian before had not swept all away) might have notice of it.

To that end, letters were dispatched by post, from the king and his princes, throughout all Israel and Judah; and those that were directed to the remnant of Israel were thus worded:

‘ Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the Lord God
 ‘ of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the
 ‘ remnant of you that are escaped out of the hand of the
 ‘ kings of Assyria. And be not ye like your fathers, and
 ‘ like your brethren, who trespassed against the Lord God
 ‘ of their fathers, and were therefore given up by him to
 ‘ desolation, as ye see. Now be not ye stiff-necked, as
 ‘ your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord,
 ‘ and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for
 ‘ ever, and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness
 ‘ of his wrath may turn away from you. For if ye turn
 ‘ again unto the Lord your God, your brethren and your
 ‘ children shall find compassion before them that have led
 ‘ them captive, so that they shall come again into this land;
 ‘ for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and
 ‘ will not turn away his face from you, if ye return to
 ‘ him.’

With these letters the posts passed from city to city, through the countries of Ephraim and Manasseh, even unto Zebulun; but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. So little of good had that great calamity, which had so lately befallen their brethren, wrought upon them. Nevertheless, divers of Asher, and of Manasseh, and of Zebulun too, humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem.

But in Judah, the power of God (figuratively expressed by his hand) wrought so effectually, that with one heart they applied themselves to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, which they were sensible proceeded from the word of the Lord. So that there assembled at Jerusalem
 much

much people, a very great congregation, to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month.

But because the false worship must be done away, before the true can be rightly and acceptably performed, the first thing they did, being thus met together, was the taking away all the idolatrous altars that were in Jerusalem, and casting them into the brook Kidron. Which done, and the priests and the Levites having sanctified themselves, they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month (observing the right day, though they could not for that time observe the right month) and brought in the burnt-offerings into the house of the Lord.

And because many in the congregation were not sanctified (for a multitude of the people out of Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, who yet were admitted to eat the passover, though against the law, Levit. vii. 20.) the Levites were charged to kill their passovers for them (which, had they been clean, they themselves should have done, Levit. i. 5.) And good king Hezekiah (knowing how much the inward preparation of the heart exceeded the outward ceremonious cleansing) offered this atoning prayer to the Lord for them, saying,

‘ The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, even the Lord God of his fathers, although he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.’ And so acceptable to the Lord was this pious request, that he hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.

The rest of this great solemnity (the greatest that had been performed in Jerusalem since the time of king Solomon) the reader may see in the remainder of this chapter, 2 Chron. xxx.

Now when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah by king Hezekiah’s command, and brake the images in pieces, and cast down the groves, and threw down the high-places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, and out of that part of Ephraim and Manasseh also which was subject unto Judah (of which see 2 Chron. xiii. 19.) until they had destroyed them all.

Nor spared he the brazen serpent, which Moses had made by the command of God, Numb. xxi. 8, 9. But because the children of Israel had burnt incense to it, he brake it

in pieces, and in contempt called it Nehushtan, that is, a piece of mere brass.

Then, that he might make a thorough reformation, he regulated the priests and Levites, with respect both to their courses of waiting, and the respective services they were to perform in the house of the Lord, and about his worship. And that they might be encouraged in their attendance, according to the law of the Lord, he commanded the people to give them their portion; which thereupon was brought in so plentifully, that they all had enough to eat and to spare; so that store-houses were provided to lay up what was left, and stewards appointed to take the charge and care of receiving and distributing it.

Thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, working that which was good and right in truth before the Lord his God: for in every work that he undertook, in the service of the house of God, he sought his God, according to the law and the commandments, and did it with all his heart. And indeed he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, trusting in the God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him, viz. since the division of the kingdom. And the Lord, who is never short on his part, was with him, and prospered him whithersoever he went.

In his father's time (who, for his own and his people's sins, was brought low) the Philistines had invaded the low country, and the south of Judah, and had taken many cities with their villages from Judah, which they possessed themselves of, and dwelt in, 2 Chron. xxviii. 18. these Hezekiah recovered from them, and gave the Philistines a full defeat.

His father Ahaz had also, through fear, subjected himself and the kingdom to the king of Assyria, 2 Kings xvi. 7. This being uneasy to Hezekiah, he refused to serve the Assyrian any longer, and forbore to pay him tribute. Whereupon, in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, Sennacherib, then king of Assyria, entering with an army into Judah, encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them. So we read it in 2 Chron. xxxii. 1. But in 2 Kings xviii. 13. it is said expressly, that he came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them; with which agrees the prophet Isaiah, chap. xxxvi. 1. Yet taking this latter to be
spoken

spoken by a trope of the whole for a part, * it may be understood that he, in the pride and haughtiness of his heart, thought to have won them all; but being restrained, took only some of them.

However, Hezekiah foreseeing that, after he had taken the out-cities, he would aim at Jerusalem, the royal seat of Judah, thought fit, while he had time, to make it as strong as he could. Wherefore taking counsel with his princes and chief officers, and setting many hands to the work, he caused all the fountains of water, which were without the city, to be stopped. And cutting off the brook [Gihon] which ran through the middle of the land, he brought it down to the west side of the city of David; that so he might both secure himself of a sufficient supply of water, and straiten the enemy for want of it. Then he repaired the wall that had been broken down, supposed by Joash king of Israel, in the time of Amaziah king of Judah, 2 Chron. xxv. 23.) and having raised it up to the towers, he strengthened it with another wall without. He repaired also the fortress (called Millo) in the city of David. And having made darts and shields in abundance, he set captains of war over the people, and causing them to be mustered before him, he spake comfortably to them, bidding them be strong and courageous, and be not afraid, nor dismayed, because of the king of Assyria; for (said he) there are more with us than with him. With him, indeed, is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles.

But although the people were somewhat heartened by these encouraging words; yet Hezekiah considering the strength of the Assyrian, and what he had done already, thought it safer for him to submit, and thereby save his country from slaughter, spoil, and rapine, than to try it out by the sword.

Wherefore sending his ambassadors to the Assyrian king, who then lay with all his forces before Lachish, (a city belonging to the tribe of Judah, Josh. xv. 39.) he by them acknowledged his offence, intreated him to withdraw his army, and promised to bear what penalty he would lay upon him.

The Assyrian king thereupon appointed him to pay three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold. The

* 2 Kings xviii. 2 Chron. xxxii.

three hundred talents of silver, at three hundred seventy-five pounds each talent, came to one hundred and twelve thousand and five hundred pounds: and the thirty talents of gold, at four thousand five hundred pounds a-piece, came to one hundred thirty-and-five thousand pounds; so that the whole sum was two hundred forty-and-seven thousand and five hundred pounds.

To pay this fine, Hezekiah took all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house. And that not sufficing, he found it necessary to cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the Lord, and from the pillars which he had over-laid with gold; for it seems when he opened the doors of the temple (which his father had shut) and restored the worship of God, in the beginning of his reign, he had over-laid the doors and pillars with plates of gold. But when the Assyrian king had gotten the money, instead of raising the siege, and withdrawing his forces, he sent three of his prime commanders (Tartan, Rabfaris, and Rabshakeh) from Lachish, with a great host against Jerusalem, with intent (as is supposed) to place a garrison therein for the king of Assyria.

These coming to Jerusalem, and demanding to speak with the king, he sent forth to them three prime ministers of state, Eliakim who was comptroller, or over the household, with Shebna the secretary of state, and Joab the recorder. But when, by the coming forth of these, the Assyrians perceived that entrance was denied them; Rabshakeh, in the name of his master Sennacherib, spake thus unto them:

‘ Speak ye now (said he) to Hezekiah, Thus saith the
 ‘ great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this
 ‘ wherein thou trustest? Thou sayest, I have counsel and
 ‘ strength for the war; but they are but vain words. On
 ‘ whom therefore dost thou rely, that thou rebellest against
 ‘ me? Thou trustest (it may be) upon the staff of this
 ‘ broken reed, even Egypt, on which, if a man lean, it
 ‘ will go into his hand and pierce it; for such is Pharaoh
 ‘ king of Egypt unto all that trust in him. But if ye shall
 ‘ say unto me, We trust in the Lord our God (I answer,
 ‘ What reason have ye to trust in him whom ye have so
 ‘ openly done despite unto? for) is not that he, whose high-
 ‘ places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and
 ‘ hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, ye shall worship before
 ‘ this (only) altar in Jerusalem.

Then

Then, to express the highest contempt of Hezekiah's strength, and to deride his weakness, he added, 'Now therefore, I pray thee, give hostages to my lord the king of Assyria, and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be but able on thy part to set riders on them. And if thou be not, how then wilt thou be able to put to flight one captain of the least of my master's servants? But besides, it is in vain for you to rely upon the Lord; for am I now come up without the Lord against this place to destroy it? No, no; the Lord said to me, 'Go up against this land, and destroy it.'

Rabshakeh, it seems, delivered this message in the Jewish language; and that troubled Hezekiah's ministers, lest the Jews that were within hearing upon the wall should be thereby discouraged. Wherefore they desired Rabshakeh to speak to them in the Syrian language, which they told him they understood, and not talk any longer with them in the Jews language, in the hearing of the people that were on the wall.

But Rabshakeh, deriding their fear, thus replied to him that made that request: 'Hath my master sent me to speak these words to thy master and thee only? Hath he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall; that they may know before-hand what they must trust to, if they stand out against my master, to wit, to eat their own dung and drink their own urine; that is, to undergo the utmost extremities of a close and long siege.'

Then raising his voice, and directing his speech to the people on the wall, he cried in the Jews language, 'Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria.' Upon which the people giving attention, he went on:

'Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he shall not be able to deliver you out of my hand. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, The Lord will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.'

'Hearken not unto Hezekiah; for thus saith the king of Assyria, make an agreement with me, by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and of his own fig-tree, until I come, and take you away to a land like your own; a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil of olive, and of honey, that ye may live, and not die. And
' hearken

‘ hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he deceived you, saying, ‘ The Lord will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the ‘ nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the ‘ king of Assyria? Then recounting the places he had won,* ‘ he went on, asking, Where are the gods of Hamath, and ‘ of Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Henah, ‘ and Ivah? Have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? ‘ Which of all the gods of the countries hath delivered their ‘ country out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Je- ‘ rusalem out of my hand?’

Here Rabshakeh stopped, expecting probably that the people would have expressed their minds; but the people held their peace, and answered him not; for the king’s commandment was, ‘ Answer him not a word.’

But when Eliakim, with the other two officers came back to king Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh; the good king, rending his clothes also, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord, to beg help and deliverance from him; sending mean while Eliakim and Shebna, with the elders of the priests, covered also with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, to stir him up to seek the Lord for them.

These, coming to Isaiah, said, ‘ Thus saith Hezekiah, ‘ This is a day of trouble, and of rebuke and blasphemy ‘ (to wit, in Rabshakeh’s condemning the taking away the ‘ high places, &c.) For the children are come to the birth, ‘ and there is not strength to bring forth (meaning, perhaps, ‘ to finish the reformation begun). It may be the Lord ‘ thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the ‘ king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living ‘ God, and will reprove them. Wherefore lift up thy prayer ‘ for the remnant that are left, since ten tribes of twelve ‘ are already carried away, and so many cities now taken ‘ in Judah.’

The good prophet, not dismayed with the Assyrian threats, gave them this short, but comforting answer:

‘ Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the Lord, ‘ be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with ‘ which the servant of the king of Assyria hath blasphemed ‘ me. Behold, I will send a blast (or spirit) upon him, ‘ and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own ‘ land.’

* 2 Kings xix. Isaiah xxxvii

Mean

Mean while Rabshakeh, the Assyrian herald, having summoned the city Jerusalem to yield, and received no answer, was returned, to give the king his master an account of his undertaking, and found him warring against Libnah, a city belonging to the priests, Josh. xxi. 13. and 1 Chron. vi. 57. which, in the reign of Joram, son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, had revolted from Judah, 2 Kings viii. 22.) for Rabshakeh had heard that Sennacherib had departed from Lachish.

At Libnah it was that Sennacherib heard the rumour (which God by the prophet had said he should hear); which was, That his own country was invaded by Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, who was come out to fight against him. Wherefore resolving to return home with all speed, to defend his own land (which the blast, or spirit, that God sent upon him, disposed him to) he sent messengers again unto king Hezekiah, with a second summons, in these haughty terms:

‘ Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, by telling thee Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done unto all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered? Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Kezeph, and the children of Eden, which were in Thelazar? Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Henah, and of Ivah?’

The former summons was delivered by word of mouth, but this was sent by a messenger in a letter; which when king Hezekiah had received and read, he went up into the house of the Lord, and having spread it before the Lord, he poured forth his supplication before the Lord in these words:

‘ O Lord God of Israel, who dwellest between the cherubims, Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; for thou hast made both heaven and earth. Bow down, O Lord, thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, O Lord, and see, and hear all the words of Sennacherib, who hath sent to reproach the living God. True it is, O Lord, that the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, but wood and stone, the work of men’s hands; therefore they have destroyed them,

‘ Now

‘ Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech thee save thou
‘ us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth
‘ may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only.’

To this fervent prayer, the Lord vouchsafed to return
an answer, by his prophet Isaiah, who sending to Heze-
kiah said :

‘ Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, That which thou
‘ hast prayed to me against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, I
‘ have heard, and this is the word which the Lord hath
‘ spoken concerning him : The virgin, the daughter of Zion,
‘ hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn : The daugh-
‘ ter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. Whom
‘ hast thou reproached and blasphemed ? and against whom
‘ hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on
‘ high ? even against the Holy One of Israel. Then rhetor-
‘ ically exaggerating his haughty threats, he goes on :
‘ By thy messengers thou hast reproached the Lord, and
‘ hast said, With the multitude of my chariots I am come
‘ up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Leba-
‘ non, and will cut down the tall cedar trees thereof, and
‘ the choice fir-trees thereof, and will enter into the lodgings
‘ of his borders, and into the forest, and his fruitful coun-
‘ try. I have digged, and drank strange waters, and with
‘ the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of be-
‘ sieged places. (Then, to take down his pride, and let him
‘ see that he had arrogated to himself what was due to the
‘ Lord, whose instrument only he was, the prophet thus in-
‘ terrogates him) : Hast thou not heard, that I have done
‘ it long ago, and that of ancient times I have formed
‘ it ? Now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldst
‘ be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps. (And
‘ to shew that he had not prevailed so much by his own
‘ strength, as by God’s having weakened them whom he
‘ subdued, the prophet adds) ; therefore their inhabitants
‘ were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded,
‘ they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb,
‘ as the grass on the house-top, and as corn that is blasted
‘ before it be grown up. But I know thy abode, thy going
‘ out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. Because
‘ thy rage against me, and thy tumult is come up into mine
‘ ears ; therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my
‘ bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way
‘ by which thou camest. Then giving Hezekiah a sign,
‘ to

‘ to confirm the certainty of his deliverance, the prophet
 ‘ concludes after this manner ; Therefore thus saith the Lord
 ‘ concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into
 ‘ this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it
 ‘ with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that
 ‘ he came shall he return, and shall not come into this city,
 ‘ saith the Lord ; for I will defend this city, to save it,
 ‘ for mine own sake, and for the sake of my servant David.’

But the deliverance was quicker than the sign. For in that very night, the angel of the Lord went forth, * and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand, amongst which were all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria ; so that in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses.

Thus this haughty king, with shame of face, returned into his own country, and dwelt at Nineveh ; whither divine vengeance followed him. For not long after, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god (which some take to be the figure of Noah’s ark, others, the image of an eagle) his two sons, Adrammelech and Sharezer, smote him with the sword ; and escaping into the land of Armenia, made way for Esarhaddon, another of his sons, to ascend the Assyrian throne.

The occasion of this regi-parricide, not touched in the sacred text, is in other story thus delivered :

When Sennacherib was got home, with the loss of so great an army, he demanded of some about him what the reason might be, that the irresistible God of heaven so favoured the Jewish nation. To which he was answered, that Abraham, from whom they descended, by sacrificing to him his only son, had purchased his protection to his progeny. Whereupon the king replied, ‘ If that will win him, I will spare him two of
 ‘ my sons, to gain him to my side.’ Which when his sons Sharezer and Adrammelech heard, they resolved to prevent their own deaths by his. See Prideaux’s Introduction to reading history, p. 164.

To these times may be referred those prophecies of Isaiah, which are contained in chap. x. and in chap. xiv. 25. and xxx. 31. and xxxi. 8, and that of the prophet Micah, chap. v. 6.

Thus the Lord saved Hezekiah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria †,

* A. M. 3291. † 2 Chron. xxxii.

and from all others; and both guided and guarded them on every side. And so evident it was that this deliverance was wrought by the immediate hand of God, that many thereupon brought gifts unto the Lord at Jerusalem, and presents also to king Hezekiah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforward. And indeed he had exceeding much riches and honour, so that he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and all manner of pleasant jewels; an armory also for warlike weapons, and store-houses to receive the increase of corn, wine and oil; stalls also for all manner of greater cattle, and cotes (or folds) for flocks; for he had very great possessions of flocks and herds, God having given him substance in abundance.

But in the midst of all this affluence of riches and honour, it pleased God to visit him with a mortal sickness, and at the same time to send his prophet Isaiah to him, to bid him set his house in order (and settle his affairs) for he should die.

When Hezekiah had received this sorrowful message, he turned his face towards the wall (that outward objects might not distract his thoughts), and pouring forth his soul in prayer to the Lord, he said, 'Remember me, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.'

This short prayer, poured forth with plenty of tears, proved so effectual with his gracious God, that before Isaiah (who, as soon as he had delivered his message, departed) was gone out into the middle court of the king's house, the word of the Lord came to him again, saying, 'Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people', thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears; behold I will heal thee, so that on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord. Nor only so, but I will add unto thy days fifteen years. And I will deliver thee, and this city, out of the hand of the king of Assyria (if he should hereafter attempt any thing against thee, or it); and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for the sake of my servant David.'

This sudden return of the prophet, with a message so directly contrary to the former, made Hezekiah take the bold-

ness to ask the prophet what the sign should be that the Lord would heal him, and that he should go up unto the house of the Lord on the third day. To which the prophet answered, that the sign which the Lord would give, to assure him that he would perform what he had spoken, should be at his own choice, whether to have the shadow go ten degrees forward, or as many backward, on the sun-dial.

Hezekiah, thinking it less marvellous for the shadow to go down ten degrees, chose to have the shadow return back ten degrees. Whereupon the good prophet Isaiah crying to the Lord to give this confirming sign to the sick king, he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down on the sun-dial*, which king Ahaz had caused to be made. And the prophet then ordering a lump of figs to be laid on the king's sore, he recovered.

As soon as he was recovered, he committed to writing this memorial of his affliction and sorrow, and of his thankful acknowledgment to the Lord for his recovery :

‘ I said, in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the
 ‘ gates of the grave : I am deprived of the residue of my
 ‘ years. I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in
 ‘ the land of the living : I shall behold man no more, with
 ‘ the inhabitants of the world. Mine age is departed, and
 ‘ is removed from me, as a shepherd's tent : I have cut off,
 ‘ like a weaver, my life. He will cut me off with pining
 ‘ sickness : from day even to night wilt thou make an end of
 ‘ me. Like a crane, or a swallow, so did I chatter : I did
 ‘ mourn as a dove ; mine eyes failed with looking upward
 ‘ (which is the posture of suppliants). O Lord, I am op-
 ‘ pressed, ease thou me. What shall I say ? He hath both
 ‘ spoken unto me, and himself hath done it. I shall go softly
 ‘ all my years, in the bitterness of my soul. O Lord, by
 ‘ these things men live, and in all these things is the life of
 ‘ my spirit : so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.
 ‘ Behold, for peace I had great bitterness ; but thou hast, in
 ‘ love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption ;
 ‘ for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. For the
 ‘ grave cannot praise thee ; death cannot celebrate thee ;
 ‘ they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.
 ‘ The living, the living, he shall praise thee ; as I do this
 ‘ day : the father to the children shall make known thy truth.

‘ The Lord was ready to save me ; therefore we will sing
 ‘ my songs to the stringed instruments, all the days of our
 ‘ life, in the house of the Lord.’

The fame of this great miracle (of the sun’s altering his course *, and going backward) being spread far abroad, came to the ear of Merodach Baladan, the son of Baladan king of Babylon ; who thereupon sent ambassadors with a present to king Hezekiah, both to congratulate his recovery (for he had heard that he had been sick) and to inquire more particularly about that great wonder. And now for a further trial, that Hezekiah might see, and be made yet more sensible of his own weakness, God left him to act according to his own affections. To that purpose we read, in 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.

He, thus left to the conduct of his own discretion, thought he could not entertain the Babylonish ambassadors more honourably, or with greater demonstration of hearty kindness and respect to their master, than by shewing them the glory and strength of his house and kingdom. Wherefore leading them to the store-houses of his most precious things, he shewed them the silver, the gold, the jewels, the spicery, and the precious ointments ; his armory also, and all his treasures ; there was nothing remarkable in his house, or in all his dominion, that he shewed them not.

When he had done thus, the prophet Isaiah came to him, and asked him whence those ambassadors came, and what they came about. And the king telling him they came from Babylon : ‘ What, said the prophet, have they seen in thy house ?’ ‘ Truly all, replied the king, that was to be seen
 ‘ in my house, they have seen ; for there is nothing among
 ‘ my treasures that I have not shewed them.’ ‘ Then hear
 ‘ the word of the Lord,’ said the prophet, ‘ Behold, the
 ‘ days shall come, that all that is in thine house, and that
 ‘ which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall
 ‘ be carried into Babylon ; nothing thereof shall be left, saith
 ‘ the Lord. And of thy sons which thou shalt beget, shall
 ‘ they take away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of
 ‘ the king of Babylon.’

The good king, who had erred through human weakness, not stubborn wilfulness, humbly bowing to the judgment, replied : ‘ Good is the word of the Lord, which thou hast

* 2 Kings xx. Isaiah xxxix.

‘ spoken ;

'spoken; especially seeing there shall be peace and truth in 'my days.' This is that which is hinted at, in 2 Chron. xxxii. 26. where we read, that Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, &c. Which shews he had some ostentation or vain glory in shewing his treasures.

We now draw near to his end *. And as he was, perhaps, the only man in history, that had a lease of his life; so this business of his, too much openness to the Babylonian ambassadors, happening about the beginning of those fifteen years which the Lord had granted him, it is not to be doubted but that he did many things in the remaining part of that term, for the honour of God, and the good of his people, more than are recorded in the books which we have. But the unhappy loss of that book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah (to which we are here referred for a further account of his acts) having deprived us of the memoirs of the latter part of his life, we must close his story with this short account: that he made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city. And that when the term assigned him was expired, he slept with his fathers, and was buried in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David; and that all Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, did him honour at his death.

We read of two great ministers of state under this king Hezekiah, Eliakim and Shebna †; who were sent forth to receive the king of Assyria's message by Rabshakeh, and afterwards to consult the prophet Isaiah about it, 2 Kings xviii. 17, 18. and chap. xix. 2. The former of these was doubtless a very good man, but the latter was stark naught. So that the prophet Isaiah was sent by the Lord not only to reprove him, but to denounce sore judgments against him. The prophet, therefore, in the name of the Lord, told him, that he would not only throw him out of his offices (the places of honour and profit he had got) and place Eliakim in them; but he would carry him away also into captivity, and would violently turn and toss him, like a bull, into a large country, where he should die. And he would give his office to Eliakim (whom he, it seems, had supplanted, and had gotten from him the office of treasurer) and would make Eliakim a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah.

* 2 Kings xx. 2 Chron. xxxii. † Isaiah xxii.

Unlike to Hezekiah was his son and successor Manasseh; who at twelve years old came to the crown, * and reigned (first and last) five-and-fifty years in Jerusalem. For he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord hath cast out before the children of Israel. He built again the high-places, which his father Hezekiah had broken down; and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves (as Ahab king of Israel had done), and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them; and built altars, not only in the two courts of the house of the Lord, but in the house of the Lord also.

And he set a carved image (an idol of his own making) in the house of God. He also caused his children to pass through the fire, in the valley of the son of Hinnom. And he observed times, and used enchantments, and practised witchcraft, and dealt with familiar spirits, and with wizards. And besides all this, he shed innocent blood in such abundance, that he is said to have filled Jerusalem therewith, from one end to the other.

Among the rest that helped to make up that purple stream, it is more than probable the innocent blood of that right noble, and truly evangelical prophet Isaiah was spilt. For though the holy text gives no account of his death, yet ecclesiastical writers deliver, that under this king Manasseh he was in his extreme age, after he had lived more than an hundred years, and prophesied more than sixty of them, most barbarously martyred by being sawed in two. To which, not improbably, the author to the Hebrews might refer, when he said, 'They were sawed asunder,' Heb. xi. 37.

So far did this Manasseh, by these his horrible impieties provoke the Lord to anger, that the Lord sent his prophet to him, with this message; 'Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly, above all that the Amorites did which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols, therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I am about to bring such calamities upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever shall hear of it, both his ears shall tingle. For I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria (that is, deliver her up to captivity, as I did Samaria) and

* 2 Kings xxi. 2 Chron. xxxiii. A. M. 3310.

‘ the plummet of the house of Ahab (wich was a total destruction). And I will wipe Jerusalem, as a man wipeth a dish, turning it upside down. And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies.’

These dreadful denunciations of judgment not working the desired effect, because both king and people turned the deaf ear, the Lord let loose the Assyrian upon them: nay, it is said, he brought upon them the captains of the host of Assyria; and they taking Manasseh among the thorns (where, poor guilty man, he thought to hide himself) bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

Being now in Babylon, a captive, and in fetters, he had time to consider what he had done, and whom he had so audaciously sinned against. And now, bowed by affliction, he besought the Lord his God; and humbling himself greatly before the God of his fathers, he prayed unto him. And the Lord was intreated of him, and brought him again to Jerusalem, and restored him to his kingdom; and then Manasseh acknowledged that the Lord was God.

He who desires to read the prayer of Manasseh, which he made when he was bound in Babylon, * may find that which bears his name in the Apocrypha, between the story of Bel and the Dragon, and the first book of the Maccabees. But in that which is called the Bishops Bible, it is placed (I know not why) between the second book of Chronicles, and the book of Ezra.

To manifest the sincerity of his repentance by deeds, as well as by words, Manasseh, after his return from his Babylonish captivity, took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the Lord, together with all the altars which he had built in the mount of the house of the Lord, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. And then repairing the altar of the Lord, sacrificed thereon burnt-offerings, and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel. Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high-places, yet unto the Lord their God only; so that they did not now sacrifice directly to idols, but to God, in the idols places.

And as he made this reformation in religion, so for the greater security of his kingdom, he not only put captains

* 2 Kings xxi. 2 Chron. xxxiii.

of war in all the fenced cities of Judah, but built a wall (or perhaps carried on rather, and finished, or repaired, that out-wall which his father Hezekiah had begun, 2 Chron. xxxii. 5. without the city of David, on the west side of Ghion, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish-gate; and compassed the tower (called Ophel) about, having raised it up to a very great height.

But having fallen so foully as he had done, though he was restored in a good degree, yet I observe, that when he died, he was not buried (as his father was, and as the good kings were) in the royal sepulchres; but he was buried in the garden of his own house, called the garden of Uzzah.

His son Amon, who succeeded him, had great advantages over his father Manasseh, to have done well. For though Manasseh sprang from an excellent father, whose example was enough to instruct a son, yet he being but a child when his father died (of but twelve years of age when he came to the crown) was the more liable to be corrupted, and misled. Whereas Amon was two-and-twenty years old when he began to reign, and had his father's misery for a warning to him. The iron fetters, which his father wore in Babylon, might have deterred him (one would think) from running that course which had brought his father to them, but they did not. For he did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh had done; and forsaking the Lord God of his fathers, he walked not in the way of the Lord, but following his father's steps, served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them, sacrificing unto all the carved images which his father had made. Thus he followed the worst part of his father's life, but not the best; for he did not humble himself before the Lord, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but he trespassed more and more. Wherefore the Lord suffered his servants to conspire against him, and they slew him in his own house, after he had reigned two years.

His death, as bad as he was, was revenged upon his murderers. For the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against him, and then took his son Josiah, a child of eight years old, and made him king in his father's stead.

This was that king, who was prophesied of by name above three hundred years before he was born, 1 Kings xiii. 2. Him therefore the Lord having especial regard unto, so seasoned with divine graces in his childhood, that while he

was

was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father, and did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, walking in all the good ways of David, * without declining to the right hand or to the left.

In the twelfth year of his reign (which was the twentieth of his age) he began the reformation in Judah, commanding Hilkiah the high-priest, with others of the priests and door keepers, to bring forth out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels that had been made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven; which he burnt without Jerusalem, in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel (a city in the tribe of Benjamin, which upon the division of the kingdom belonged to Israel, but was afterwards taken from Jeroboam the second, by Abijah king of Judah, 2 Chron. xiii. 19). And because that had been a chief place of idolatry, where Jeroboam the son of Nebat had set up one of his calf idols, Josiah sent the ashes of these idolatrous things thither, to express his contempt of that place.

The idolatrous priests, which the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high-places, in the cities of Judah, and in the parts round about Jerusalem, he put down; with them also that burnt incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, to the planets, and all the host of heaven. Which priests, Tremellius and Junius called *Atratas*, black-coats, because they were *pullis æstibus indutos, ex superstioso ritu*; that is, cloathed with black garments, out of a superstitious rite. Annot. on 2 Kings xxiii. 5. The Bishops Bible calls them Chemarims, both here, and in Hosea x. 5. and in the marginal note give this as the reason of their being so called, that they did wear black apparel.

The good king going on with his reformation, not only brought forth the grove (which some take to be an idol, having the resemblance of a grove carved upon it) from the house of the Lord, unto the brook Kidron, without Jerusalem; and burning it there, stamped it to small powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of them that had sacrificed thereunto; but brake down also the houses of the Sodomites, that were by the house of the Lord; where the women wove hangings for the grove.

He took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire.

* 2 Kings xxii. 2 Chron. xx. i. A. M. 3367.

The altars also, that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made for the worship of the host of heaven (described by the prophets Jeremiah, chap. xix. 13. and Zephaniah, chap. i. 5.) and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the Lord, did the king beat down; and breaking them into pieces, cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron.

The high places, which were before Jerusalem, on the right hand of that noted mount, which, from the fruit it bore, was usually called the mount of olives; but from the many filthy idols that were set up in it, is here, in contempt, called the mount of corruption, (which high places king Solomon had long before built for Ashteroth, the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh, the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites) these did the king defile. And breaking in pieces the images of all sorts, and cutting down the groves, he filled their places with the bones of men. Topheth also, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, he defiled, that no man might thenceforth make his son or daughter pass through the fire to Moloch. All which particulars are here enumerated, that the reader may see to what an height of impiety God's own peculiar people,* the offspring of faithful Abraham, of humble Isaac, and of plain Jacob, were then arrived.

When thus this zealous king had cleansed Jerusalem, he went forth to the cities of Judah, and of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali; and having brought all the idolatrous priests out of the cities of Judah, he defiled the high places where the priests had burnt incense, and brake them down, both publick and private, from one side of Judah to the other.

But when he was come to Bethel, where Nebat's son had set up his golden calf, he brake down both the altar and the high place, and stamped them to powder, and burned the grove. And as he turned himself about, espying the sepulchres that were there in the mount, he sent and took the bones out of them, and burning them upon the altar, polluted it, according to the word of the Lord, which the man of God had proclaimed against it more than three hundred years before.

* 2 Kings xxiii. 2 Chron. xxxiv.

Then observing an inscription upon a tomb, he asked, 'What title is that which I see?' And the men of the city telling him it was the sepulchre of the man of God who came from Judah, and proclaimed against the altar of Bethel the things which he had now done to it: 'O let him alone, said the king: Let no man move his bones.' So they let his bones rest, with the bones of the old prophet, that had misled him to his destruction (and who was buried in the same grave with him, 1 Kings xiii. 31.) who is here said to have come out of Samaria, 2 Kings xxiii. 18. but there, to have dwelt in Bethel, 1 Kings xiii. 11.

Nor did Josiah thus at Bethel only; but in all the cities of Samaria (that is, of Israel, whereof Samaria was the chief) which were then subject to the kings of Judah, he took away all the houses of the high-places, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the Lord to anger, and did to them as he had done at Bethel.

As for the priests, those of them that were of the Levitical order, and had defiled themselves with the idols, he removed from their sacerdotal function; not admitting them to come to minister at the altar of the Lord at Jerusalem, yet permitting them to eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren.

But as for the other priests who were priests of the high-places (such as they whom Jeroboam, and other, idolatrous kings of Israel and Judah, had made and set up) he sacrificed them on their altars, and burnt their bones upon them.

But though the king himself was thus zealously affected for carrying on the work of reformation, yet the generality of the people seem to have come but unwillingly to it*. So that he was fain to use his kingly authority, to restrain them from idolatry.

And the prophet Jeremiah, who entered upon his prophetic function much about this time (viz. in the thirteenth year of this king, Jer. i. 2.) complained much of them, in his ii, iii, and ivth chapters.

The king's next care was for repairing the temple. Wherefore being returned from his visitation-progress to Jerusalem, in the eighteenth year of his reign, he sent his chancellor Shaphan, with Maasiah the governor of the city, and Joah the recorder, to Hilkiah the high-priest, with order to cast

* Jeremiah.

up the money that had been brought into the house of the Lord by the offerings of the people, and to deliver it to the surveyors of the work, that they might pay it to the workmen, for materials and workmanship in repairing the breaches of the house of the Lord.

While they were looking up the money, Hilkiiah found the book of the law given by Moses (supposed by some to be the very autograph *, or first draught, written by Moses's own hand) which he gave to Shaphan, to deliver to the king.

How long this book had lain hid, is uncertain. The last mention I find of it, was in Jehoshaphat's time, more than two hundred years before; but the finding it now was of great service. For when Shaphan brought it to the king, and read in it before him, the king observing what judgments were therein threatened to all them that should break the laws therein contained, and considering how short his ancestors and his people had been of keeping them, commanded Hilkiiah the priest, with divers of the king's principal servants, to go and inquire of the Lord for him, and for them that were left in Israel and Judah, concerning the words of that book: fearing the wrath of God would be poured out upon them, because their fathers had not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that was written in that book.

Hilkiiah thereupon, and the rest whom the king had appointed to go with him, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum, keeper of the wardrobe, who dwelt in the college in Jerusalem.

This affords an observation not unfit to be considered, namely, That these great ministers, and the high-priest himself, should choose to go, on so solemn an occasion, and on so important a business, and that too from the king, to learn the mind of the Lord from a woman, a prophetess: when, besides what other prophets there might then be (for Zephaniah prophesied in the days of this king †, and there are prophets mentioned, with the priests and the people, when the book of the covenant was read, 2 Kings xxiii. 2) that eminent priest and prophet Jeremiah (who by this time had been exercised in the prophetic office between four and five years) living but at Anathoth, about three miles from Jerusalem, must needs be well known, and conversant there. Yet so it was, that to a woman they went, to inquire of the Lord for both king and people.

* 2 Kings xxiii. 2 Chron. xviii. † Zephan. i. 1.

And having imparted their business to her, they received from her this answer:

‘ Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me (to wit, the king of Judah) Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof; even all the curses which they have read in the book before the king of Judah. Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger by all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched.’

‘ But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, so shall ye say unto him: Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, concerning the words which thou hast read*, because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof; and in token of thy humbling thyself, didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord: Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace; neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof.’

When they had reported this answer to the king, he, having sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem, went up into the house of the Lord, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him; the priests also, and prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and there the king read, in their hearing, all the words of the book of the covenant, which was found in the house of the Lord†. Which done, the king, standing in his place at a pillar, made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant, which were written in that book; and he engaged all the people also, that were present, to stand to that covenant.

The same year, being the eighteenth of his reign, king Josiah kept the passover unto the Lord in Jerusalem; the particular account and description whereof the inquisitive reader may find in 2 Chron. xxxv. from ver. 1 to 18. Where

* 2 Chron. xxxiv. † 2 Kings xxiii. 2 Chron. xxxv.

this general account is given of it, That neither did all, or any, of the kings of Israel (or of Judah) keep such a passover as this which Josiah kept; nor was any passover like to that kept in Israel, from the days of Samuel the prophet.

From this eighteenth year of his reign, to the one and thirtieth (which was his last) I find no particular account of his acts, unless some parts of the reformation which he wrought should be referred to this latter time of his age, after he had received the book of the law. For in 2 Kings xxiii. 24. his putting down the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, the teraphim, and the idols, &c. is said to be done, that he might perform the words of the law, written in the book which Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the Lord. But probably much of that time might be spent in repairing and adorning the temple. For immediately after the account of this famous passover, it follows in the text, 2 Chron. xxxv. 20. "After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up," &c.

This coming up of the Egyptian king was to fight against Carchemish, a place then belonging to the king of Assyria, not far from the river Euphrates. And Josiah, probably at first not understanding his intent in this expedition, but suspecting he had a design upon him, went forth against him. But when Pharaoh-Necho understood that Josiah had taken the field, he sent ambassadors to him, who in his name should say to him, 'What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah, I come not against thee this day, but against the house of Assyria, (2 Kings xxiii. 29.) wherewith I have war; for God commanded me to make haste? Forbear therefore to resist God, who is with me, lest he destroy thee.'

The annotators on the Bible tell us, in their marginal note on 2 Kings xxiii. 29. that Pharaoh being to pass with his army through king Josiah's country, he feared he would have done him harm, and therefore would have stayed him. It seems he was not willing to trust the Egyptian king with an army in his country.

However it was, Josiah having advanced with his army so far, would not turn his back upon him, nor take his word; which, it seems (though he did not then know so much), came from the Lord. But disguising himself, that he might not be made the common mark, he went down to fight with him in the valley of Megiddo, which belonged to Manasseh.

But

But notwithstanding his disguise, the Egyptian archers found him out, and gave him a mortal shot. Whereupon the king said to his servants, 'Have me away, for I am sore wounded.'

His servants thereupon shifting him from that chariot into the next, brought him to Jerusalem; and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers; and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him.

But none did more lament the untimely loss of this good king, than that good man the prophet Jeremiah; who thereupon (though sometime after, and probably at several times) composed that threnody, or mournful song, which bears the title of *The Lamentations of Jeremiah*.

Therein he sets forth the manifold transgressions which his people had run into, and mournfully bewails their deplorable condition, from the extreme miseries which he foresaw would come, and afterwards saw did come, upon them after the death of Josiah.

So great was the love that the people of Judah bare to this king, that the singing-men and singing-women, upon mournful occasions, in after-times, were enjoined to commemorate, in their lamentations, the untimely death of this excellent king.

And so great was the sorrow they expressed for his death, that the prophet Zechariah above an hundred years after remembered it; and compared the mourning which he then prophesied should in after-times be in Jerusalem, to the mourning of Hadadrimmon (the place where Josiah received his mortal wound) in the valley of Megiddo, Zech. xii. 11.

Nor was the love of the people ill-placed on so excellent a king; for, besides the particular instances before related of his piety and virtues, this general eulogy is given of him, 'That like unto him there was no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him:' unhappy, perhaps, in this only, that by this unadvised and wilful act of his, in going to fight with the king of Egypt without cause, he both shortened his own life, and deprived himself of the benefit of that part of the divine promise, that he should be gathered to his grave in peace, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 28.

But although this king had been so eminently good, and had done so much for the reclaiming of his people, and appeasing the anger of the Lord; yet the Lord turned not from

from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations which Manasseh had given him: but the Lord said, I will remove Judah out of my sight, as I have removed Israel (who was gone into captivity already); and I will cast off this city of Jerusalem, which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, 'My name shall be there.'

Hence it is, that the prophets of that time complained so grievously of the people, and denounced the judgments of the Lord against them, even to the destruction of their city, and their own captivity; as did Jeremiah in the iv, v, vi. xiv, xv, xvi. xix. and xxth chapters of his prophecy, and the prophet Zephaniah in his: with whom may be joined the prophet Habakkuk*; who is thought to have lived in the latter part of Josiah's reign, or under his sons, a little before the captivity by the Chaldeans, which he foretold, Hab. i. from ver. 5. to ver. 12.

When Josiah was dead, the people took Jehoahaz his fourth son, (called Shallum, 1 Chron. iii. 15.) and anointing him, made him king in his father's stead. He was three-and-twenty years old when he began his reign, which was very short, yet long enough to shew his propensity to evil. For though he reigned but three months, yet in that time he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according as his wicked ancestors had done.

At the three months end, Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt (though he came not forth with any design against Judah, yet being set upon by king Josiah, and prevailing) improved his victory at Megiddo so far as to make the crown of Judah tributary to Egypt. Wherefore deposing Jehoahaz, he set up Eliakim, another of Josiah's sons, to be king in his room, changing his name to Jehoiakim; and laid an easy tribute on the land, of an hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold; but forty and two thousand pounds in all; which money Jehoiakim raised by a general tax upon the land, rating every man towards it according to his ability. And this taxation, it is probable, the prophet Jeremiah had respect to, when in his mournful complaint he said of Jerusalem, 'She that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!' Lament. i. 1.

As for Jehoahaz himself, Pharaoh-Necho, when he dethroned him, first put him in bonds at Riblah (a city of Syria)

* Habakkuk. A. M. 3398.

where

where he left him in safe custody, whilst he pursued his expedition against the Assyrian; and afterwards, at his return, took him with him to Egypt, where he died, as the prophet Jeremiah had foretold he should, Jer. xxii. 10, 11, 12. There he bids the king and people of Judah not weep for the dead (by which he is supposed to mean king Josiah) neither lament him (for his own sake) but weep sore for him that goeth away, for he shall return no more, nor see his native country. 'For, said he, thus saith the Lord concerning Shallum (which was the right name of Jehoahaz) the son of Josiah king of Judah, who reigned instead of Josiah his father, and who went forth out of this place, he shall not return hither any more.'

About this time it may be supposed the prophet Nahum lived, and prophesied*: yet there is, I know, diversity of opinions concerning his time. The Jews place him in the time of Manasseh. The annotators on the Bishops Bible set him before Manasseh, and about the time of Hezekiah. Jerom also places him under Hezekiah, about the time that Senacherib besieged Jerusalem, after the ten tribes were gone into captivity. But Tremellius and Junius refer him to the latter part of Josiah's reign. Which seems the more likely, as being nearer to the destruction of Nineveh and the Assyrian monarchy, which Nahum's prophecy did more particularly relate to. Neither did this prophet only prophesy against Nineveh; but the prophet Zephaniah also, who began to prophesy in the days of Josiah king of Judah, Zeph. i. 1. prophesied directly against Assyria in general, and of the desolation of Nineveh in particular, chap. ii. ver. 13, &c. But the Assyrian rod (as it is called, Isa. x. 5) had not yet done all its work.

Jehoiakim, who received both name and kingdom from Pharaoh-Necho king of Egypt†, being five-and-twenty years old when he began to reign, is said to have reigned in Jerusalem eleven years (if there be not a mistake in the account). But not taking warning by his brother's punishment, he also did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his brother had done; and so much the worse, by how much the longer.

In the beginning of the reign of this king, the Lord commanded his prophet Jeremiah to stand in the court of the Lord's house, and deliver his message to all the people of Judah that came to worship there. Which message was to ex-

* Nahum. † A. M. 3398.

hort them to repent and amend their ways, that he might not bring on them the evil he had purposed. And to assure them, that if they did not hearken to his admonition, amend their lives, and walk in his law, then would he make that house like Shiloh (which, though the ark of the Lord had abode there more than three hundred years, he had given up to an utter destruction) and would make that city (Jerusalem) a curse (or pattern for cursing) to all the nations of the earth.

This message so enraged the priests and false prophets (of which there were more than a good many) that, setting the people on, they seized on Jeremiah *, and told him that for his thus prophesying destruction to the temple and desolation to the city, he should surely die. And all the people were gathered against him in the house of the Lord.

But when the princes of Judah had notice given them of this tumult, they came up from the king's house unto the house of the Lord, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house to hear the cause. And then the priests and the false prophets, who were his accusers, exhibited their charge against him unto the princes and to all the people, saying, 'This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye (said they, appealing to the people) have heard with your ears.'

The prophet, having heard their charge, did not deny the fact, but defended it, saying unto the princes, and to all the people present, 'The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house, and against this city, all the words that ye have heard. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God, and the Lord will repent him of the evil he hath pronounced against you. As for me, (added he) behold, I am in your hand, to do with me as seemeth good to you. But know ye for certain, that if you put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood † (that is, the guilt of shedding innocent blood) upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth, the Lord hath sent me unto you, to speak all these words in your ears.'

When the princes had heard Jeremiah's defence, they and all the people (whom the priests had before misled and drawn in to join with them, against the good prophet) gave judgment on Jeremiah's side; and said to the priests, and to the

* 2 Kings xxiii. 2 Chron. xxxvi. † Jer. xxvi.

false prophets, 'This man is not worthy to die; for he hath spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God.'

And to confirm this their judgment by precedent, certain of the elders of the land rose up, and thus spake to the assembly:

'Micah, the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Zion shall be ploughed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest, Mic. iii. 12. Did Hezekiah, and all Judah, put him to death? Nay, did not the king fear the Lord, and besought the Lord, and the Lord repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Wherefore, if we should answer your bloody minds herein, we might procure great evil against our souls.'

It seems as if the priests and false prophets, to balance this precedent of the prophet Micah, did urge another and fresher precedent, of one, that for prophesying (as Jeremiah had done) against that city and land, had been lately put to death, even under this present king; for thus it follows in the text: 'And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the Lord, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath-jearim. He prophesied against this city, and against this land, according to all the words of Jeremiah. And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death; which he hearing of, and being afraid, fled into Egypt. But Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt after him; and they, fetching him from thence, brought him to the king, who caused him to be slain with the sword, and his dead body to be cast into the graves of the common people.'

This was a fresh instance, and in point of fact it was an apt precedent against Jeremiah. So that it might, in all likelihood, have gone hard at this time with the good prophet, had not the Lord raised him up a true and powerful friend in the court; which was Ahikam. For thus it follows: 'Nevertheless, the hand of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, was with Jeremiah, that they should not deliver him into the hand of the people, to be put to death.' Now Shaphan, we may remember, was chancellor to king Josiah, and Ahikam was one of his principal counsellors, whom he sent with

the high-priest and others to inquire of the Lord by the prophetess Huldah, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 20, 21.

The prophecies of this book, as well as divers of the other prophets, are much misplaced with respect to the order of time wherein they were given forth; which is supposed to have happened through the negligence of the priests in those times, who had the charge of registering and keeping them.

For the manner was, when any of the prophets had written any thing by way of prophecy, he caused it to be affixed to the gate of the temple, where it remained for certain days, that all might read and take notice of it. And after it had stood there the appointed time, the priests took it into the temple to record it in a book; but, for want of diligence and due care to enter them in course, as they were written, they left them in that disorderly manner in which we have them.

But besides that, it must be considered that divers of the prophets (more especially Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel) wrote in very troublesome times; Ezekiel and Daniel in the captivity, and in Babylon; and Jeremiah, when all things, both in church and state, were in very great disorder, and the first copy of his book was destroyed by king Jehoiakim, Jer. xxxvi. 23. So that it is not to be wondered at, that they are so misplaced as they are, but rather to be thankfully admired that we have them at all.

The account of times also, and computation of years, wherein some chief actions mentioned by the prophets were performed, are so differently delivered, that it is hard, if possible, to reduce them to a certainty. But that not being the chief end of my present undertaking, I shall be the less regardful of it.

We observed before, that Jehoiakim was made king by Pharaoh-Necho king of Egypt, under tribute, 2 Kings xxiii. 34. Soon after which, Assyria prevailing against Egypt, 2 Kings xxiv. 7. whether Jehoiakim took occasion from thence to with-hold his tribute and deny subjection to the Assyrian; or whether only God brought it on him for his evil courses; Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon (the seat, or chief city of the Assyrian monarchy, after the destruction of Nineveh) came up against him; and besieging Jerusalem, took both it and him, and carried him, with part of the vessels of the house of God, to Babylon. Where, after he had been kept a while, he is supposed to have been sent back to Jerusalem by the king of Babylon (upon his submission and promise of fidelity

lity for the future) and continued a tributary king to Nebuchadnezzar, as he had been before to Pharaoh-Necho.

This expressly I do not find in the Holy Scripture, yet there are some passages in it that glance that way; and as it is the common opinion, so it may somewhat help to make out the time of his reign, and give more room for the prophecies that belong to it.

At this time also, and with him it is thought, and very probably, that the prophet Daniel, with his three companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were carried to Babylon. For Daniel himself delivers, that at the time when Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiakim and the vessels of the Lord's house, he spake unto Ashpenaz, the master of the eunuchs, that he should bring with him to Babylon some of the children of Israel, of the seed of the king and of the princes, such as were well-favoured and without blemish, of good parts and well educated; that, being instructed in the language and learning of the Chaldeans, they might be fit to serve the king in his palace: and that the eunuch thereupon made choice of these four, Dan. i. 3, 4. 6. where, leaving them for a while among the Chaldeans, to be trained up for future service, let us go on and see how it fared in the mean time with the prophet Jeremiah.

He, being freed by the means of good Ahikam, for this time from the danger he was in by his enemies the priests, went on the more boldly in the work of the Lord. And in the fourth year of king Jehoiakim, he delivered again a message from the Lord to the people of Judah and Jerusalem; in which, after he had, in an expostulatory reproof, reminded them of the many warnings and admonitions that from time to time had been given them, and of their obstinate disobedience; he told them, in the name of the Lord, 'That because they had not hearkened to his words, the Lord would bring Nebuchadnezzar his servant (then lately settled on the Assyrian throne) with all the northern nations that were under him, against the land of Judah, and city of Jerusalem, and would make them serve the king of Babylon seventy years.'

Yet, to leave them a door of hope, he also told them, that after they had borne that seventy years servitude, as a punishment for their transgressions, he would turn their captivity, and would punish the Assyrians and the Chaldeans and all the other nations that had afflicted them for

their iniquities; which he confirmed to them by the type of a cup of wine, called the wine-cup of the fury of the Lord; which the prophet was required to take at the hand of the Lord, and to cause all those nations (in a typical representation) to drink thereof, in token of the calamities and distresses that should come upon them.

About this time also the prophet was commanded to make him bonds and yokes,* as a confirming type of the captivity which was to come upon the people: but the execution of this command seems to have been deferred till Zedekiah's time, Jer. xxvii. ver. 3. 12.

Mean while Jehoiakim, after he had served Nebuchadnezzar three years,† withdrew his service from him, and rebelled against him. Whereupon Nebuchadnezzar came up again against Judah to destroy it, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign. But before he came to Jerusalem, he fought with Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt, in Carchemish by the river Euphrates, and beat him, as the prophet Jeremiah had foretold he should, Jer. xli.

The coming up of this Assyrian army frightened the Rechabites, the posterity of Rechab, who came of Jethro, or Hobab, the Kenite, and made them betake themselves to Jerusalem for safety. They were a people, who by the institution of Jonadab their founder built not houses, but dwelt in tents.

By these the Lord intending to convince and reprove Jehoiakim and the Jews, he commanded Jeremiah the prophet to bring these Rechabites into one of the chambers of the house of the Lord, and to give them wine to drink. The prophet did go, and having set pots of wine before them, invited them to drink. But they refused, alledging that Jonadab, the son of Rechab, their father, had commanded them, that neither they nor their children should drink any wine for ever, nor build any house, nor sow seed, nor plant any vineyard; but to dwell in tents all their days, that they might live many days in the land wherein they were strangers.‡ And they affirmed that they had obeyed the voice, and kept the charge of Jonadab their founder, in all that he had charged them; having drank no wine, neither they nor their wives, their sons, nor their daughters. Neither had they built houses to dwell in, nor possessed

* Jer. xxvii.

† 2 Kings xxiv.

‡ Jer. xxxv.

vineyards,

vineyards, nor sowed fields; but had dwelt in tents, and had obeyed and done, according to all that their father Jonadab had commanded.

Now had the prophet gained his point. Wherefore, having commended the Rechabites for having so stedfastly adhered to and observed the command of their father Jonadab, and promised them a reward from the Lord, he turned it upon the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem; upbraiding them, that they who were the seed of Abraham, and peculiar people of the Lord, should be less regardful of the commands of God, whom they called their father, and who had been more than a father to them, than the Rechabites, who were not of the stock of Israel, had been of the commands of their ancestor Jonadab.

But this not working the desired effect upon the people of Judah and Jerusalem, the Lord commanded his prophet Jeremiah* to get him a roll of a book, and write therein all the prophecies which the Lord had given him against Israel, and against Judah, and against other nations, from the first of his beginning to prophesy, in the thirteenth year of Josiah; to see if the house of Judah, when they should hear all the plagues summed up together, which the Lord for their transgressions had threatened to bring upon them, would return every man from his evil way, that the Lord might forgive their iniquity and sin.

Jeremiah thereupon calling to him Baruch the scribe (who usually was his amanuensis) dictated to him, and he wrote from the prophet's mouth all the words which the Lord had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book; that is, upon a book that was to roll up.

When it was finished, the prophet bid Baruch take it (inasmuch as he himself was shut up, that he might not go into the house of the Lord) and read in it the words of the Lord, in the hearing of all the people in the house of the Lord, upon the fast-day. This, it seems, was a fast of their own appointing, as (we are told) their manner was, when they feared war, or any great plague from God, as now they did by the Babylonians. 'It may be (added he) they will present their supplication before the Lord, and will return every one from his evil way: for great is the anger and the fury which the Lord hath pronounced against this people.'

* Jer. xxvi.

What is meant here by the prophet's saying, he was shut up, or in what manner he was shut up, so that he could not go into the house of the Lord, is somewhat uncertain. The Bible note says, 'He was shut up in prison through the malice of the priests.' They, no doubt, were malicious enough to have done it; but it doth not appear he was so shut up. Nay, it rather appears he was at liberty; for in ver. 19. the princes advised Baruch, that he and Jeremiah should hide themselves, and let nobody know where they were. And hid they were, ver. 26. which Jeremiah could not have been, if he had been in prison. Tremellius and Junius suppose three ways of his being shut up, and leave us to take which of the three we like best. The first is, that the king had forbidden him to go into the temple to speak to the people; but the prophets of God did not use to observe such prohibitions of their prophetic ministry. The second is, that the chief priests had excommunicated him, and therefore he might not go; but that, in all likelihood, he would have less regarded. The third is, that God, to provide for the safety of his prophet, and to punish the people, would not let him go amongst them; this, of the three, seems the more likely; and so, his being shut up, was by a stop in himself, a restraint in his spirit or mind.

However, according to Jeremiah's direction, when the fast-day was come, Baruch went and read in the book the words of the Lord, in the house of the Lord, to all the people of Jerusalem and those that came from the cities of Judah thither. Which when Micaiah (the son of Gemariah, in whose chamber the book was read) had heard, he went down into the secretary's office in the king's house, where all the princes sat, and declared unto them what he had heard out of the book which Baruch had read to the people.

Whereupon the princes sent to Baruch to come to them, and bring the roll with him, which he did. Then they bid him sit down and read it to them, which he did also. But when they had heard it, they were all of them afraid. And having examined him about it, and satisfied themselves that it was the prophet's words, or of his dictating, and that Baruch was but the penman; they advised him to go and hide himself, both he and the prophet, and let no man know where they were. For (said they) we will assuredly tell

tell the king of all these words. And accordingly, laying up the roll in the secretary's office, they went into the court to the king, and told him what they had heard read.

It being the ninth month with them (which takes in part of the tenth with us) the king sat in his winter-house, having a fire on the hearth before him; and upon the report the princes had made of the roll which Baruch had read to them, the king sent Jehudi (one of his attendants) to fetch it; who having brought it, read it in the hearing of the king, and of all the princes that stood beside him.

But he had not read above three or four leaves (that is, three or four paragraphs, or spaces in the roll) when the king, displeased with it, cut it in pieces with a pen-knife; and (though three of his princes interceded with him, that he would not) he cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, till all the roll was consumed.

This shewed a great obstinacy and impenitence in the king, and in the rest of his servants. And indeed they were not dismayed, nor rent their garments, at the hearing of such terrible judgments denounced against them: but the king was so far from that, that he sent some officers to apprehend Baruch, and the prophet Jeremiah. But they were disappointed, for the Lord had hid his servants from them.

On this presumptuous act of the king, the Lord commanded the prophet to take another roll, and to write in it all the words which were in the first roll, which the king had burnt: and withal, that he should say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, 'Thou hast burnt this roll, because therein was written, that the king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah, he shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out, in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. I will punish him, and his seed, and his servants, for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them.' But they hearkened not.

The like fearful judgments did the prophet denounce against this wicked king, in the 22d chapter of his prophecy, from ver. 15. to 20. where having briefly touched some of the virtues of his father, the good king Josiah, *

* Jer. xxii.

and

and his prosperous reign as the effect thereof, he charges this king, that his eyes and his heart were altogether set upon his covetousness, and to shed innocent blood; to oppress, and to do violence. And then pours forth this judgment upon him, 'Thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah king of Judah, They shall not lament for him, as they that say, Ah, my brother! or, Ah, sister! They shall not lament for him, so much as to say, Ah Lord! or, Ah, his glory! but he shall be buried with the burial of an ass, dragged and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.'

Thus did the Lord give warning upon warning: but when no warning would prevail, nor any threatening was regarded, the Lord at length gave up this hardened king into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, who took Jehoiakim, and bound him in fetters, intending to have carried him to Babylon, if he had not died on the way.

Jehoiakim left a son behind him, named Jehoiachin (called also Jeconiah, 1 Chron. iii. 16.) a youth, if not a very child. It is true, he is said, in the book of Kings, to be eighteen years old; but in the book of the Chronicles he is said to be but eight years old when he began to reign. Whatever his age was, he succeeded his father in the throne; and as young as he was, did evil in the sight of the Lord as his father had done. From which, and the message that was thereupon sent him, it is more reasonable to think him eighteen, than but eight years old.

For to him the prophet Jeremiah was sent with this message, 'As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah (so in contempt he curtailed Jeconiah) the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence; and I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and whose face thou fearest, even Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans. And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country where ye were not born, and there shall ye die; but to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return.'

Then to obviate an objection which might be made in favour of the king on this wise, 'Is this man, Coniah, a despised broken idol? Is he a vessel wherein is no plea-

‘sure? If not, wherefore dost thou say, they shall be cast out, both he and his seed, into a land which they know not?’ The prophet makes this general appeal. ‘O Earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord: Thus saith the Lord, Write this man childless; a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.’

The judgment here denounced was quickly executed. For in the same year Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and besieged Jerusalem; and Jehoiachin, not able or not daring to defend it, quickly yielded. And by that time he had reigned three months and ten days at the most, he went out, with his mother, his princes, his servants, and his officers, to the king of Babylon, who carried them all away to Babylon, with the mighty men of valour, to the number of ten thousand in all. Amongst whom was Mordecai, cousin and guardian to Queen Esther, Esth. ii. 5, 6, 7. And with them he took also all the treasures of the house of the Lord, and of the king’s house, that he could find; and the chief of the handicraftsmen, as smiths and carpenters, &c. leaving the poorest sort of the people behind.

In the room of this Jeconiah, Nebuchadnezzar set up Mattaniah his uncle, third son of king Josiah, whose name he changed to Zedekiah; and he is said to have reigned eleven years.

But he also, though he had seen the ruin of his two brothers Jehoahaz, or Shallum, and of Jehoiakim, or Eliakim, and of his cousin Jeconiah, or Jehoiachin*, took not warning by their miseries; but did evil in the sight of the Lord, as they had done, and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, though he spake to him from the mouth of the Lord, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 12.

The Lord thereupon shewed the prophet, in vision, the state both of them that were gone into captivity, and of them that yet remained. This was represented to him by two baskets of figs; the one, comparatively at least, very good, and the other stark naught. The good figs were an emblem of that part of Judah which was lately carried away captive to Babylon, whom the Lord said he had sent into the land of the Chaldeans for their good, and promised that he would set his eye upon them for good, and would bring them (in

their posterity) back again, and settle them in that good land. But the evil signs (which were so bad they were not eatable) were a figure of king Zedekiah, with his princes and people*, that remained yet in the land of Judah; amongst which, they were comprehended who he foresaw would run to Egypt for succour. All whom the Lord, by his prophet, threatened to deliver up, to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, that they might be made a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither he should drive them. 'And, added he, I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence among them, 'till they be consumed from off the land which I gave to them and to their fathers.'

The prophet †, it seems, in Jehoiakim's time, had by the command of the Lord made bands and yokes, and put them upon his neck, as types or emblems of the bondage which the Lord had long and often threatened to bring upon the people of Judah, as well as upon other lands. And now the Lord commanded him to send of these bands and yokes to the several kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Zidon, by their ambassadors, who came to Zedekiah at Jerusalem: with command, that they should let their masters know, that the Lord had given all their lands to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, his servant; and to warn them, that they should not hearken to their prophets, diviners, dreamers, enchanters, sorcerers, who persuaded them otherwise, but should submit to him at their peril.

But to Zedekiah king of Judah the prophet went himself, and said, 'Bring your necks, both thou and thy people, under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live: for why will ye die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the Lord hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?' that will not stoop to his judgments, by submitting themselves to his rod (the Assyrian, Isa. x. 5.) which he had appointed for their correction.

Then, having cautioned the king against his false prophets, who soothed him up with pleasing but false stories, he turned himself to the priests and to the people; whom also he warned, not to hearken to their prophets, who told them they should be so far from going captives themselves, that the vessels of

* Jer. xxiv. † Jer. xxvii.

the Lord's house, which had been carried to Babylon, should shortly be brought back again: for he assured them, they prophesied a lie to them. And he bid them put their prophets upon the trial; that if they were prophets indeed, and had the word of the Lord with them, as they pretended, they should make intercession to the Lord of hosts, that the vessels which were yet left in the house of the Lord, and in the king's house, go not to Babylon after the rest: which that they should, he now again expressly foretold.

This so nettled the false prophets, that one of them, whose name was Hananiah *, soon after set upon Jeremiah in the house of the Lord, before both priests and people: and taking upon him to prophesy, in the style and phrase of the true prophets, he said, ' Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the Lord's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away, and carried them to Babylon. And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the Lord: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.'

The prophet Jeremiah heard all this. And being willing to shew his good affection to his people and country, only said, ' Amen,' I wish it might be so, and that the Lord would perform what thou hast spoken, but the issue will prove which of us is in the right.

This soft answer emboldened Hananiah to go further. Wherefore stepping to Jeremiah, he took from off his neck the yoke, which, for a sign of the captivity, the Lord had commanded him to wear, and brake it in the presence of the people; saying withal, in confirmation of his former prediction, ' Thus saith the Lord, Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, from off the neck of all nations, within the space of two full years.'

The prophet Jeremiah (whose tongue was not, as the others was, his own, to speak both when and what he pleased) made him no answer at that time, but went his way. And now, no doubt, Hananiah the false prophet was cried up among the people, as having foiled Jeremiah, and got the day. But the Lord would not suffer Hananiah, who had offered such indignity to himself and his prophet, to go off so.

* Jer. xxviii.

Wherefore the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet (after that Hananiah had broken the yoke from off his neck) bidding him go and tell Hananiah: 'Thus saith the Lord, Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and they shall serve him; and I have given him the beasts of the field also.'

Having thus contradicted Hananiah's false prophecy, he went on and said, 'Hear now, Hananiah, the Lord hath not sent thee, but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore, thus saith the Lord, Behold I will cast thee from off the face of the earth; and this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord.' And the Lord made good his word, for Hananiah died the same year.

Some time after Jeconiah, with the queen his mother, and the princes of Judah, was carried captive to Babylon, Zedekiah his uncle (whom Nebuchadnezzar had made king in his stead) sent ambassadors it seems (upon some occasion, perhaps to pay his tribute) to Nebuchadnezzar at Babylon. By these the prophet Jeremiah sent a letter, directed to the residue of the elders which were carried away captive, and to the priests and the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon.

The tenor of this letter was *, to let them know from the Lord, and in his name, that their present captivity was by God's appointment, who had caused them to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon; and that it should be a long captivity, of seventy years continuance: that therefore they should not suffer themselves to be deceived by their false prophets and dreamers that were among them (who would persuade them, they should quickly return to their own land again); but that they should settle contentedly, (in submission to the will of God) in the places where they were put (which is set forth by building, planting, and marrying for propagation and increase) and should seek the peace of the city (where city is, by synecdoche, put for the nation) whither the Lord had caused them to be carried, and pray unto the

* Jer. xxix.

Lord for it, because in the peace thereof they should have peace.

Then for their encouragement, he gives them a comforting promise from the Lord, that when the seventy years should be expired, he would visit them in good will, and would bring them back again into their own land; and would afterwards be gracious to them, and answer them when they should call upon him.

And because it is accounted (*Solamen miseris, socios habuisse doloris*) some sort of comfort to the afflicted, that they are not alone in sufferings, but that others also taste of the same bitter cup with them; he told them, the Lord would visit their brethren that were not gone into captivity with them, but remained yet at Jerusalem, both king and people, with sorer judgments than he had done them: for he would punish these with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence; and would make them like those vile figs (which the Lord had shewed him in a vision, chap. xxiv.) which for their badness could not be eaten; and he would give them up to be carried away to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be made a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither he would drive them; because they had not hearkened to his words, which he had spoken to them by his servants the prophets.

Then from the general turning to particulars, he denounced an express and terrible judgment from the Lord against two of the false prophets (whom those captive Jews had boasted of, ver. 15.) Ahab and Zedekiah by name, which he bid all the captives take notice of; which was, that because these two men had prophesied a lie unto them in the name of the Lord, therefore the Lord would deliver those two men into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who should slay them before their eyes: as it seems he did, by burning them alive. For it follows in the prophet's letter; 'And of them shall be taken up a curse, by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon; who, (when they would wish the greatest evil to any one) shall say, The Lord make thee like Zedekiah, and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire.'

The cause of this great severity on Nebuchadnezzar's part, may reasonably be supposed to be their prophesying that the Jewish captives should speedily be delivered out of his hand. Which was looked upon as a moving of sedition, a raising of rebellion,

rebellion, and a disturbing of the peace of the Babylonish government. But the true cause of the Lord's displeasure was, because they had done villainy in Israel, having committed adultery with their neighbours wives, and spoken lying words in the name of the Lord; words which he had not commanded them:

Upon the receipt of this letter, one Shemaiah (who made himself somebody among the captive Jews in Babylon) took upon him to write to Zephaniah the priest (who was next in place to Seraiah the high-priest, Jer. lii. 24.) and to the rest of the priests at Jerusalem, soothing up Zephaniah, as if the Lord had made him such a priest as Jehoiada the high-priest was of old, to imprison and stock offenders. Then complaining to him of Jeremiah, for having written to them in Babylon that this captivity would be long, and that therefore they should build, plant, and settle there; he represented Jeremiah as a madman, a prophet of his own making; and therefore would have priest Zephaniah put him into prison, and in the stocks there.

Zephaniah, having received this letter from Shemaiah, read it to Jeremiah. Whereupon the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, requiring him to send again unto all them of the captivity, and to say unto them, in the name of the Lord, concerning Shemaiah (whom he called the dreamer) 'Because Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, but he hath caused you to trust in a lie, therefore thus saith the Lord, I will punish Shemaiah and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people, neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the Lord, because he hath taught rebellion against me.'

The good prophet, having thus discharged his duty to those that were already gone into captivity, returned to warn them that remained behind; that they, by turning from their evil ways, and returning to the Lord, might have prevented their own captivity and ruin. And the better to furnish him with fresh matter of argument to persuade them, the Lord sent him down to the potter's house; where, by observing the power the potter had over his clay, to make or mar his work at his pleasure, he might thence take occasion to inculcate to the people the uncontrollable power which the Lord had over them. Which when he had done, they desperately answered, 'We will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do

‘do the imagination of his evil heart *.’ The Lord thereupon threatening them by his prophet, to scatter them, as with an east-wind, before their enemies, and make their land desolate; they flattered themselves, that because they had the law among them, and the priests and their own prophets on their side, they were out of danger of the mischiefs threatened. ‘For the law (said they) shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet.’ And therefore concluding Jeremiah was wrong, they combined against him, and said, ‘Come, let us devise devices against Jeremiah, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.’

This moved the afflicted prophet to pour forth his complaint unto the Lord against them. And the Lord thereupon bid him get him a potter’s earthen bottle †, and taking with him some of the most ancient both of the people and of the priests, go forth to the valley of the son of Hinnom (called Tophet) and there proclaim the words that he should tell him (which were dreadful threatenings of extreme calamities, expressed in Jer. xix. from verse 3. to 14.) and then break the bottle before them, as a type of the breaking of that people to pieces. All which the prophet performed; and then coming back from Tophet, he took up his standing in the court of the Lord’s house, and said to all the people:

‘Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold I will bring upon this city, and upon all her towns, all the evil that I have pronounced against it; because they have hardened their necks that they might not hear my word.’

Pashur, son of Immer the priest, being at that time a chief governor in the house of the Lord, when he heard Jeremiah prophesy these things, not only struck him, but put him in the stocks that were in the high-gate of Benjamin by the house of the Lord, and kept him in the stocks all night; but on the morrow he took him out again. Then said Jeremiah to him, ‘The Lord hath not called thy name Pashur ‡, which signifies increasing liberty (for he had taken liberty from the prophet); but Magor-missabib, that is, Fear round about. For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends, and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it. And I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of

* Jer. xviii.

† Jer. xix.

‡ Jer. xx.

‘ Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay many of them with the sword. And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house, shall go into captivity, and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou and thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.’

Now because the exercise which Jeremiah had with this perverse people, as well those of them that were gone to Babylon, as those that remained in Jerusalem (of which he mournfully complains in the rest of this 20th chapter) was very great, the Lord raised him up a fellow-labourer, who, by taking part of the work, might make his burden somewhat the lighter; and by prophesying the same thing, might confirm his prophecies among the people, and therein be a comfort unto him.

This was Ezekiel the priest, who, having been carried to Babylon among the captives, when king Jehoiachin (alias Jeconiah) was carried away, was, in the fifth year of that king’s and his own captivity, called to the office of a prophet, and made to see the visions of God. And having been, by the glorious discoveries of the Lord unto him, encouraged strengthened, instructed, and fitted for the service (of which he gives an account in his three first chapters *) he was commanded to take a tile (or plank) and having pourtrayed upon it the city Jerusalem, to lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast up a mount against it, and set a camp against it, and plant battering rams against it, round about, all in portraiture; and then to take an iron pan, and set it for an iron wall between him and the city.

By these, and by certain other postures and actions, as by lying a certain time on his left-side, then a certain time on his right-side, and uncovering his arm; by making filthy bread, of mixed and unusual grain; and by eating his bread by weight, and drinking his water by measure, the prophet exhibited unto his people a plain type of the siege that should shortly be laid against Jerusalem, the force and strength of the batteries, and the manifold hardships and miseries which the besieged should thereby sustain. All which he describes in his fourth chapter.

And in his fifth chapter, by another type, of shaving his head and beard, dividing the hair by weight, burning a third part of it with fire, cutting another third part with a

* Ezek. i. ii. iii.

knife, scattering another third part in the wind, and binding up a small part in the skirt of his garment, and then casting some of that small part also into the fire, he set before his people the destruction and dispersion of the residue of the Jews, after Jerusalem should be taken.

The next year (which was the sixth of that captivity *) as the prophet Ezekiel was sitting in his house, among the captives of Babylon, having the elders of Judah (then captives there) before him; the hand (that is, the power) of the Lord fell upon him; and the spirit lifting him up between the earth and the heaven, brought him in a vision to Jerusalem; where the Lord leading him from place to place, shewed him the abominations, as well private as publick, of the men of Judah and Jerusalem.

And having gone through all that, he shewed him, by another vision of six men with their destroying weapons in their hands, the slaughter that should be made of these wicked people; and the preservation of the few godly ones amongst them, by the vision of a man, with an ink-horn in his hand, going before those slaughter-men, and setting a mark upon the fore-heads of them that should be spared. Which, with other like visions tending to set forth the sin and judgment of that people, and his being brought back again in vision, by the spirit of God to Chaldea, and his relating to his fellow-captives what in those visions the Lord had shewed him, are delivered and described in his 9th, 10th, and 11th chapters.

Very punctual and very particular is this prophet, in setting down the dates of his visions; and that sometimes not a year only, or a month, but to a very day.

This first vision he dates on the fifth day of the fourth month in the thirtieth year, which was the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity; but from whence this thirtieth year should commence, the text doth not express. It is pretty generally understood to be from the time that the book of the law was found, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 15. which was in the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah, who reigned fourteen years after. Which fourteen years, with the eleven years of Jehoiakim, and five years of Jehoiachin's captivity, make up the thirty years.

Thus did the Lord, by these two eminent prophets, visit his people with warning after warning, and both by very fig-

nificant types, and direct and positive prophecies, endeavoured to reclaim them. But at length, after very many warnings and threatenings given and slighted, the Lord brought upon king Zedekiah * and his people the destruction so often foretold; which Zedekiah himself was instrumental to hasten. For he rebelling against Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him king, Nebuchadnezzar came up with all his army against Jerusalem, and pitching against it, built forts against it round about.

This siege was laid on the tenth day of the tenth month, in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign; † and was shewed by the Lord to Ezekiel in Chaldea, at a great distance, on the very self same day. And then also did the Lord, by several fresh types (as that of setting on a pot with water, ‡ and seething therein the choice of the flock, with the scum in it; and that other, of taking away suddenly the prophet's wife, and forbidding him to mourn for her death) set forth both the sin and the punishment of the people, which should not be lamented.

The city being now shut up, the Lord sent his prophet Jeremiah to king Zedekiah with this message §. ' Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and be delivered into his hand; and thou shalt see the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee face to face, and thou shalt go to Babylon.'

Then, a little to alleviate this hard message, the prophet assured him from the Lord, that he should not die by the sword, but should die a natural death; and that he should be lamented, - and his funeral perfumed with burning of odours, in like manner as had been done for the former kings, his predecessors.

After the prophet had delivered this message to king Zedekiah, he with his people, thinking to atone for former sins by some shew of reformation, agreed together, to proclaim liberty to the Hebrew servants of either sex. Accordingly, both king, princes, and chief of the people entered into a covenant before the Lord, that none should serve himself of his brother a Jew; but that every one should let

* Jer. lii.

† 2 Kings xxv.

‡ Ezek. xxiv.

§ Jer. xxxiv.

his man-servant, and maid-servant, being an Hebrew, or Hebrewess, go free (at the end of six years service, according as the law directed, Exod. xxi. 2. Deut. xv. 12). And this covenant, it seems, they ratified by the ancient and solemn ceremony of dividing a calf (or heifer) into two parts, and passing between the parts; which imported a sort of imprecation on themselves, that they might be so cut asunder, in case they did not keep the covenant they then entered into.

Upon this proclamation the servants were set free; but the insincerity of the masters quickly appeared. For in a while after this, * the army of the king of Egypt coming to relieve Jerusalem, the Chaldeans hearing of their coming, raised their siege from before Jerusalem, and went to meet and fight the Egyptians.

The Jews thereupon pleasing themselves with the persuasion that the Egyptians (in this case their friends) would beat the Chaldeans (their enemies) and that therefore their danger was over, repented their having manumitted their servants; and reducing them into subjection again, caused them to return to their respective services, chap. xxxiv. 11.

This tergiversation so highly provoked the Lord, that he forthwith sent his prophet Jeremiah to them, giving him in charge to say: ' Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; I made a covenant with your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, the house of bond-men, that every man should let his brother an Hebrew, go free from him, when he had served him six years; but your fathers did not obey me. And now ye were turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour, and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name. But ye have turned back, and polluted my name (so is the breach of covenant called that is made in his name) and ye have caused every man his servant, and his handmaid, whom they had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return to their services, † and have brought them into subjection, to be your servants and handmaids again.

' Therefore thus saith the Lord, Since ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty (and keeping to it): Behold, I proclaim liberty for you, saith the Lord,

* Jer. xxxvii. † Jer. xxxiv.

' to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and
 ' I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms
 ' of the earth. And the men that have transgressed my
 ' covenant, and have not performed the words of the co-
 ' venant which they made before me, when they cut the
 ' calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof, even
 ' the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the eunuchs and the
 ' priests, and all the people of the land that passed between
 ' the parts of the calf, them will I give into the hand of
 ' their enemies that seek their life; even into the hand of
 ' the king of Babylon's army which are gone from you, for
 ' behold, I will command, saith the Lord, and cause them
 ' to come again to this city, and they shall fight against
 ' it, and take it, and burn it with fire; and I will make
 ' the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant.'

Upon this probably it was, that king Zedekiah sent Je-
 ciah, and Zephaniah the priest to the prophet Jeremiah,
 to desire him to pray unto the Lord their God for them.

But the answer the prophet gave them from the Lord,
 was this:

' Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, who sent you
 ' to me: Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to
 ' help you, shall return into their own land; and the Chal-
 ' deans shall come again, and shall fight against this city and
 ' take it, and burn it: therefore thus saith the Lord, de-
 ' ceive not yourselves with a conceit, that the Chaldeans
 ' shall surely depart from you, for they shall not depart.
 ' Nay, though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chal-
 ' deans * that fight against you, and had left none of them
 ' but wounded men; yet should even they rise up, every
 ' man from his tent, and should burn this city with fire.'

The prophet was not yet put in prison, but went up and
 down amongst the people at liberty; and intending to take
 this opportunity (now that the Chaldean army being risen
 from the siege, the gates were open and the way was clear)
 to leave Jerusalem, and to go into the land of Benjamin
 (perhaps to his own city Anathoth, which was not far off)
 he walked forth in order thereunto; but when he was in
 the gate of Benjamin, where the guard was kept, Irijah,
 a captain of the guard, charged him that he was going
 to fall away to the Chaldeans, and seized him for a deserter.

* Jer. xxxvii.

Jeremiah bluntly told him it was false, and that he was not falling away to the Chaldeans; but the captain would not hear him, but had him away to the princes. They were in such a rage at the prophet, that they fell on him and beat him; and not content with that, they committed him to prison too, in the house of Jonathan the secretary (for there, for the greater security, they had made the prison;) and into the innermost dungeon was poor Jeremiah put.

After the good prophet had lain in this filthy prison many days, king Zedekiah sent, and took him out, and had him brought privately to his house; where, between themselves, the king asked him, if there was any word from the Lord (meaning, concerning him.) ‘Yes, replied the prophet, there is; for thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. But (added he) what (or wherein) have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison? I told you indeed, that the king of Babylon should come against this city and land, and ye all see it is true: where then are your prophets that prophesied the contrary? Yet if, notwithstanding my prophecy is so apparently true, I must needs lie in prison for it: Hear now, I pray thee, O my lord the king, and let my supplication be accepted by thee, that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan, lest I die there.’

The king thereupon commanded that they should commit Jeremiah to the court of the prison (a more commodious place for him) and that they should give him every day a piece of bread out of the bakers street, so long as there should be any bread left in the city.

While the prophet remained in this prison, where he could speak to the people, * he ceased not to warn them of the miseries that would inevitably come upon them, if they held out till the place was taken; telling them from the Lord, ‘This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon’s army, which shall take it, and he that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence; but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey.’

* Jer. xxxviii.

But when the princes understood that Jeremiah had spoken thus to the people, they went to the king, and besought him that he might be put to death; alledging, that by such speeches he weakened the hands of the men of war that remained in the city, and indeed of all the people; and that it was thereby evident, he sought not their welfare, but their hurt.

The king (not good in himself, and now, in a strait, not in condition to contest with his princes) told them, 'They might do what they would with him.' Whereupon, without more ado, they took Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon that was in the court of the prison, letting him down with cords; and there being no water, but much mire in the place, the good man sunk down, and stuck fast in the mire.

Now had his enemies got their desire; and there, in all likelihood, had this holy prophet perished, had not God raised up an instrument for his deliverance, such as was least to be expected.

There was in the king of Judah's court an Ethiopian, or blackmoor, called Ebed-melech, which name imports, a servant of the king; and he was indeed one of the king's eunuchs. When this man had heard that they put the prophet into the dungeon, he went boldly to the king (then sitting in the gate of Benjamin) and said to him, 'My lord, O king, these men have done evil, in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet: for they have cast him into the dungeon; where, besides all other annoyances, he is like to die for hunger.'

The king then bidding Ebed-melech take with him from thence thirty men, and go take Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he died, the noble moor taking with him the men, went into the house under the treasury, and taking from thence old cast clouts and rotten rags, let them down by cords to Jeremiah into the dungeon, advising him to fasten the cords so as to prevent galling him. Which when the prophet had done, the men whom Ebed-melech had brought him drew him up by the cords out of the dungeon, and put him into the court of the prison again, where he had been a prisoner before.

This kindness to his prophet, the Lord so accepted, that while Jeremiah was yet a prisoner in the court of the prison, he commanded him to say to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian,

pian, 'Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, behold, ' I will bring to pass my words on this city, for evil and ' not for good, and thou shalt live to see them accom- ' plished; but I will deliver thee in that day, saith the Lord, ' and thou shalt not be delivered into the hand of the men ' whom thou fearest. For I will surely deliver thee, and ' thou shalt not fall by the sword; but thy life shall be given ' thee for a prey, because thou hast put thy trust in me, ' saith the Lord.'

After the prophet Jeremiah was brought back from the dungeon to his former prison, king Zedekiah sent for him to be brought to him into the house of the Lord; and having him there by himself, desired him not to hide any thing from him of that whereof he should now ask him.

The prophet, having met with such hard usage, was willing now to make better terms, especially seeing he was not under any constraint from the Lord, but was to answer the king's request. Therefore, before he answered the king, he asked him, if he would promise not to put him to death, in case what he should declare to him should not please him: and whether, if he gave him counsel he would take it. To this latter, the king made no reply; but to the former, relating to the prophet's safety, the king swore to him by the Lord (who having given him his life, could take it away if he brake his oath) that he would not put him to death, nor deliver him to those who sought his life.

Then said the prophet to the king, 'If thou surrender ' the city, and go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, ' then thy soul shall live, and thou and thy house, and this ' city shall not be burned with fire. But if thou wilt not ' go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then shall ' this city be given into the hands of the Chaldeans, and ' they shall burn it with fire; and thou shalt not escape ' out of their hands.'

But, said the king, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest, if I should yield myself to the Chaldeans, they should deliver me to those Jews to be mocked by them.

'Nay; said the prophet, obey, I beseech thee, the voice ' of the Lord which I have spoken to thee; and I can ' assure thee the Chaldeans shall not deliver thee to those ' Jews, but it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall ' live.

live But if thou refuse to go forth, this is the word which the Lord hath shewed me: all the women that are left in the king of Judah's house (the remainder of those that were carried away with Jeconiah and his mother) shall be brought forth to the king of Babylon's princes, and they shall discover how thy friends have set thee on, and have prevailed against thee, and have now left thee in the mire. So all thy wives and thy children shall be brought out to the Chaldeans, and thou thyself shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the king of Babylon, and thou shalt be the cause that this city shall be burnt with fire'

The king, having heard what the prophet had to say, charged him at parting not to let any man know what discourse had passed between them at the peril of his life. But (said he) if the princes should hear that I have talked with thee, and thereupon come and ask thee what thou hast said to me, and I to thee; let them know thou didst present a petition to me, that I would not send thee back to the prison in Jonathan's house, to die there.' Accordingly, when the princes had heard that Jeremiah had been with the king, they came and examined him what had passed between them; and he putting them off, as the king had directed him, the matter was not discovered.

Though the king carried it outwardly somewhat fair, excusing himself by some pretended necessities from following the counsel which the Lord, by his prophet, had often given him; yet he was naught and false. Which made the prophet Ezekiel break forth thus against him: 'O thou prophane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, whose iniquity shall have an end! Thus saith the Lord God, remove the diadem, and take off the crown,' &c. Ezek. xxi. 25, 26.

The prophet Jeremiah having often, on divers occasions, foretold the taking of Jerusalem, and the destruction thereof,* and that both king and people should go into captivity; now, to persuade them that they who should survive the determined time of that captivity should return, and possess their land again, himself turned purchaser, even while he was a prisoner. For Hanameel, his uncle Shallum's son, coming to him in the prison, and desiring him to buy of

* Jer. xxxli.

him his field which was in Anathoth in the country of Benjamin (the right whereof, by the law of inheritance, belonged to him as being the next of kin, Levit. xxv.) the prophet, knowing that this thing was ordered of the Lord, (that having been already made known to him) he did not hesitate, but forthwith bought the field of his cousin Hanameel for seventeen shekels of silver (which he paid by weight, as the manner then was, not by tale). And having caused the field to be conveyed to himself by written deeds, signed, sealed, and well witnessed, he delivered those purchase-deeds, both the original which was enrolled and the counterpart thereof, unto Baruch his scribe, in the presence of his cousin Hanameel, and of the witnesses that had subscribed them, and before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison; charging Baruch before them all, that he should put those evidences into an earthen vessel, that being to be hidden in the ground, they might not be defaced or spoiled, but might continue sound and whole for many days. 'For, said he, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, houses, and fields, and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.'

The siege of Jerusalem had now continued long, and the provisions of the city being by that means much spent, the famine which God by his prophets had threatened them with, as one part of their punishment, was now grown strong upon them. The bread was so near spent when Ebed-melech took Jeremiah out of the dungeon, that he thought there had been none left in the city then, Jer. xxxviii. 9. But now there was none indeed, Jer. lii. 6. And so far did the famine prevail, that Ezekiel's prophecy may be supposed to have been then fulfilled upon them, 'That the fathers should eat their sons, and the sons their fathers,' Ezek. v. 10. To which also the prophet Jeremiah may be thought to have had reference, when, recounting some of the calamities the people endured, he said: 'The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst: the young children ask bread and no man breaketh it to them. They that did feed delicately are disconsolate in the streets: they that were brought up in scarlet, embrace dunghills. The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat, in the destruction of the daughter of my people,' Lam. iv. ver. 4, 5, 10.

When the besieged were brought, through their own obstinacy to these extremities, the city at length was taken by storm, * on the ninth day of the fourth month, in the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign; the Chaldeans, after a siege of eighteen months, winning the middle gate, and the princes of the king of Babylon taking possession of it.

As soon as king Zedekiah and his men of war saw the Chaldeans had forced the gate, and were got into the city, they all fled; and leaving the city by night, went out by the way of the gate which was by the king's garden, between the two walls, and the king took the way towards the plain. But the Chaldean army lying round about the city, they that were on that side where the king went out, pursuing after him, overtook him in the plains of Jericho, and all his army being scattered from him, they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon, at Riblah in the land of Hamoth, where he gave judgment upon him.

And, in the first place, he slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes; then he slew also the princes of Judah who had withheld the king from hearkening to the prophet, and yielding himself as the Lord required. And when he had punished Zedekiah with these terrifying fights, he put out his eyes, and binding him in fetters of brass, carried him so bound to Babylon, where he kept him in prison to the day of his death.

The city thus taken, the king a captive, the princes and nobles most of them slain, and the men of war fled; † the next thing was to take the plunder, and destroy the place. To that end soon after came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guards or marshal to the king of Babylon, and having broken down the walls of Jerusalem, he burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the great men's houses, and destroyed the city with fire.

Then taking the residue of the people that yet remained in the city, together with those that during the siege had yielded themselves to the Chaldeans, he sent them prisoners to Babylon, leaving only some of the poor of the land for vine-dressers and for husbandmen, unto whom he gave vineyards and fields to till.

The riches of the temple he sent also to Babylon, ‡ and therewith Seraiah the chief-priest, and Zephaniah (his suf-

* A. M. 3420. † Jer. xxxix. & xl. ‡ Chap. lii.

fragan) the second priest, with some of the door-keepers. Some prime men also, whom he found in the city (who belike wanted either opportunity or courage to attempt an escape) he took and brought to the king of Babylon at Riblah, who caused them to be put to death there. Among these was an eunuch that had the charge of the men of war, and the muster-master-general of the king of Judah's army, with some others that were officers near the king's person.

The king of Babylon having understood what pains the prophet Jeremiah had taken to bring the king of Judah and his princes to a timely surrender, and what hardships he had undergone for so doing, had given a strict charge to Nebuzaradan, to have an especial regard to the prophet; and not only to take care that he suffered no harm, but to do for him whatsoever he himself should desire.

Nebuzaradan therefore, with the princes of the king of Babylon, sent to fetch Jeremiah from the prison to them*. But having (through forgetfulness, or much business) slipt the season, they who had the charge of transporting the captives had taken him, it seems, among the rest, and carried him away in chains as far as Ramah. From thence therefore they sent for him back, and when he was come Nebuzaradan thus spake unto him:

'The Lord thy God, who pronounced this evil upon this place, hath now brought it, and done according as he had said. Because ye have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore is this thing come upon you. But now, behold, I loose thee from the chains which were upon thine hand; and if it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come, and I will provide well for thee. But if thou hadst rather tarry here, behold all the land is before thee, go whithersoever thou hast a mind to go.' Then giving him some provisions and a present, he kindly dismissed the prophet; who understanding by Nebuzaradan, that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah (the son of Ahikam, and grandson of Shaphan) governor of the land, he went to him by Nebuzaradan's advice, and dwelt with him at Mizpah, among the people that were left in the land.

When the captains of king Zedekiah's forces (which fled with him upon the taking of the city, and were scattered

* Jer. xl.

and dispersed about the country) understood that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah governor over the land of Judah, and had committed to his care and charge the people of all ranks that remained in the land, they came with their men to Mizpah, and submitted themselves to him.

Among these were Ishmael (who was of the king's seed) Johanan and Jonathan (two brothers) Seraiah, and divers other principal commanders; whom, with their men, Gedaliah the governor took into his protection, on condition they should be subject to the king of Babylon. And letting them know that he would keep his court at Mizpah (that he might be near the Chaldeans, to correspond with them, and receive orders from them), he left them at liberty to settle themselves in any of the cities they liked, and to store themselves with wine, oil, and summer-fruits, for a winter-provision.

The Jews also that in the common danger had fled for safety to the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and into other countries, when they heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah in the land, and had set their own countryman Gedaliah over them, returned to the land of Judah again; and having presented themselves before governor Gedaliah at Mizpah, were by him dismissed to their vintage and harvest.

But Ishmael stomaching, that Gedaliah (who was but a private person) should not only be preferred before him* (who was of the blood royal) but set over him as governor; and imparting his discontent to half a score more who were of the princes of Judah, and who also thought it beneath them to be under Gedaliah, they conspired against him, being animated thereunto by the king of the Ammonites.

This conspiracy Johanan, one of the captains, having got knowledge of, went and discovered it to Gedaliah, desiring him to give him leave to slay Ishmael. But Gedaliah being a man of great worth, and of an honourable mind, not apt to entertain suspicions of others, would not believe that Ishmael was treacherous, much less give way to so dishonourable an act as to have him slain privately.

It was not long after, that Ishmael, with the other ten princes of Judah who had escaped the slaughter and captivity, came to Mizpah, on pretence of waiting on the

* Jer. xli.

governor Gedaliah, and were kindly received and entertained by him; but they, watching an opportunity, drew their swords, and setting upon Gedaliah slew him; and, that his death might not be revenged upon themselves, they, with their retinue, taking the people of Mizpah at an advantage (who, suspecting no danger, were unprovided for defence) fell suddenly upon them too, and slew not only the Jews, but the Chaldeans also who were there with Gedaliah.

This murder and massacre they kept so private, that the second day after it was not known abroad; by which means about fourscore men of the Israelites fell also into Ishmael's hands. These coming from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria, were going to Jerusalem, to carry offerings and incense to the house of the Lord, which it is supposed they had not heard was destroyed when they came from home.

Their way lying by Mizpah, Ishmael seeing them, went forth to meet them; and that he might the more easily draw them into his snare, by conforming himself to their condition, whom he observed to be in deep mourning (for they had not only rent their clothes, after they had heard of the destruction of the holy city and temple, but had shaved their beards also, and cut themselves, which were two heathenish practices they had learned from their neighbours, contrary to the law, Levit. xix. 27, 28.) he, crocodile-like, went weeping to them: and, that he might sound their affection to the governor, invited them to come into Mizpah to Gedaliah.

But when he had by this train drawn them into the city, he fell upon them, and slew them all, except ten men. They, by acquainting him that they had treasures (or stores of wheat, barley, oil, and honey) in the field, escaped his hands, and saved their lives.

The dead bodies he cast into a pit which Asa king of Judah had made for fear of Baasha king of Israel; and then taking with him, as captives, the rest of the people that were in Mizpah (among whom were king Zedekiah's daughters) he departed from thence to go over to the Ammonites, whose king had put him upon this treacherous and bloody enterprize.

But before he could get out of the country, the report of these barbarous murders coming to Johanan, and the rest of the captains of Zedekiah's forces which had put themselves

themselves under Gedaliah's command, they drew forth their men, and marched against Ishmael, whom they found in the great waters in Gibeon, called the Pool of Gibeon, where Abner and Joab, falling from jest to earnest, had long before had a fore battle, 2 Sam. ii.

Glad were the poor prisoners whom Ishmael had brought with him from Mizpah, when they saw Johanan, and the rest of the captains with their forces coming to rescue them, and wheeling off, they went and joined themselves to Johanan; which when Ishmael saw, not daring to stand the shock, he, with eight men only in his company, escaped by flight to the Ammonites.

Ishmael thus gone, Johanan and the rest of the captives, taking with them all the people whom they had recovered from Ishmael, went and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham near Bethlehem: a place supposed, from 2 Sam. xix. 38. to have been anciently given by king David to Chimham, the son of old Barzillai the Gileadite, and yet bore his name near five hundred years after.

That place they chose the rather, that if they should be pursued by the Chaldeans, they might the more readily take refuge in Egypt; for they were afraid that the Chaldeans would fall upon them, and cut them off, because Ishmael had slain Gedaliah, the king of Babylon's governor, and some of the Chaldeans also.

Among these whom Ishmael had led captive from Mizpah, and who were rescued by Johanan, the prophet Jeremiah (we may well conclude) was one: * for we read he went to dwell with Gedaliah at Mizpah, Jer. xl. 6. and we find him now among the people at their new quarters, in the habitation of Chimham, chap. xlii 1, 2. For there Johanan and Jezaniah, with the rest of the captains, and all the people great and small, coming near to the prophet, thus bespake him: 'Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray thou for us unto the Lord thy God, that he may shew us the way wherein we should walk, and the thing we should do.' Thus, although for their safety they had pitched near the borders of Egypt, they pretended they would not dispose of themselves without the Lord's direction.

The prophet promised them, that he would both pray unto the Lord their God for them, and would faithfully

* Jer. xlii.

return them the answer which the Lord should give to their request, without hiding any thing from them. And they thereupon entered into a solemn covenant for their obedience, saying to the prophet, 'The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not according to all things, according to which the Lord shall send thee unto us; whether it be good or evil (that is, whether it please us or not) we will obey the voice of the Lord our God to whom we send thee, that it may be well with us when we obey his voice.'

The prophet thereupon supplicating the Lord on their behalfs, inquired of him, how he would have them dispose themselves; but the Lord, who saw the naughtiness of their hearts, was not forward to give an answer; so that ten days were past before the prophet received an answer from the Lord. But when he had received it, he called Johanan, with the rest of the captains, and all the people together, and told them: 'Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, unto whom ye sent me to, present your supplication before him: If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down; and I will plant you, and not pluck you up: for I repent me of the affliction that I have brought upon you. And whereas ye are afraid of the king of Babylon, be not afraid of him, saith the Lord, for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand, and I will shew mercy unto you, that he (seeing the favour I have for you) may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land.'

'But if ye say, we will not dwell in this land, but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war,* nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread, and there we will dwell: then it shall come to pass, that the sword which ye feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt; and the famine, whereof ye were afraid, shall follow close after you there in Egypt, and there ye shall die. So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt to sojourn there, they shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence; and none of them shall remain or escape from the evil that I will bring upon them. For thus saith the

* Jer. xliii.

‘ Lord of hosts the God of Israel, As mine anger and my
 ‘ fury hath been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Je-
 ‘ rusalem, so shall my fury be poured forth upon you when
 ‘ ye shall enter into Egypt; and ye shall be an execration,
 ‘ and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach, and
 ‘ ye shall see this place no more.’

When the prophet had thus delivered to the people the
 mind of the Lord, Azariah (who was called Jezaniah be-
 fore, chap. xlii. 1.) with Johanan, and all the proud men
 of their party, did in effect give him the lie: for they said
 to Jeremiah, ‘ Thou speakest falsely, the Lord our God hath
 ‘ not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there.
 ‘ But Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us,
 ‘ to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they
 ‘ might carry us away captives into Babylon, and might put
 ‘ us to death there.’

The prophet thereupon, in defence and confirmation of
 what he had before delivered to them from the Lord, and
 in testimony against them, added, ‘ The Lord hath said con-
 ‘ cerning you, O ye remnant of Judah, Go ye not into Egypt;
 ‘ and I have faithfully admonished you this day. For ye dis-
 ‘ sembled in your hearts, when sending me unto the Lord
 ‘ our God, ye said, Pray for us unto the Lord your God,
 ‘ and according to all that the Lord our God shall say, so
 ‘ declare unto us, and we will do it. And now I have
 ‘ declared it to you, but ye have not obeyed the voice of
 ‘ the Lord your God, nor any thing for which he hath
 ‘ sent me to you. Now therefore, know certainly that ye
 ‘ shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pesti-
 ‘ lence, in the place whither ye desire to go to sojourn,’
 chap. xlii. 19, &c.

Notwithstanding this, they would not obey the voice of
 the Lord, to dwell in the land of Judah; but Johanan, and
 the other captains of the forces, taking all the remnant of
 Judah, men, women, and children, with the late king’s
 daughters, and the good prophet Jeremiah, with Baruch his
 scribe (full sore against their wills) carried them out of the
 land of Judah, and brought them into the land of Egypt.

As soon almost as they were settled in Egypt, the Lord
 commanded the prophet Jeremiah, for a typical confirma-
 tion of their destruction, to take great stones in his hands,
 and hiding them in the clay in the brick-kiln, at the
 entry of Pharaoh’s house in Tahphanes, in the sight of the
 men

men of Judah, and say to them: 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will send and take my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and will set his throne upon these stones which I have hid, and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them. And when he cometh he shall smite the land of Egypt, and shall deliver to death such as are appointed for death, and to captivity such as are for captivity, and to the sword such as are for the sword. And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt, and he shall burn them, and carry them away captive, and he shall possess himself of the land of Egypt, as easily as a shepherd putteth on his (loose) garments; and he shall go forth from thence in peace; he shall break also the images of Beth-shemish (the house of the sun) in the land of Egypt, and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire.'

As these rebellious Jews had disobeyed the Lord, and disregarded his prophet; so when they were settled in Egypt, they soon grew from bad to worse, worshipping strange gods, and burning incense to the queen of heaven. Which, when the prophet Jeremiah reprov'd them for, in the name and by the express command of the Lord, they made no hesitation to tell him to his face, 'As for the word which thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken to thee, but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth; (that is, we will perform the vows we have made) to burn incense unto the queen of heaven (by which is meant the moon at least, if not all the planets) and to pour out drink-offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem; for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword, and by the famine.' Thus said the men: to which the women pertly added; 'When we burnt incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink-offerings unto her, did we do it without our men?' As much as to say, we fear not thy threats, for we have our husbands to stand by us in what we have done.

This

This daring answer provoked the Lord to denounce against them by his prophet the most fearful judgments in the most certain terms; adding, as a confirming sign, that he would give Pharaoh-Hophra, king of Egypt (unto whom they had betaken themselves for protection) into the hand of his enemies that sought his life, as he had already, in their fight, given Zedekiah their king into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who sought his life.

The prophet having thus discharged his duty to his own people the Jews, addressed himself in the rest of his book, for the most part, to the Gentiles: as to Egypt, Jer. xvi. to the Philistines, chap. xvii. to Moab, chap. xviii. to Ammon, Edom, and other people, chap. xlix. to Babylon, chap. i. and li. with some prophecies intermingled here and there, especially in chap. i. concerning the redemption of Israel.

And as this good prophet Jeremiah was thus exercised in Egypt, so was his contemporary, the prophet Ezekiel, as earnestly engaged in the like service in Chaldea, prophesying against the Ammonites, Ezek. xxv. against Tyrus, chap. xxvi. and against those that supported her and traded with her, chap. xxvii. against the prince of Tyrus, chap. xxviii. against Egypt, chap. xxix, xxx, xxxi, and xxxii. against the shepherds of Israel, chap. xxxiv. against Mount Seir or Edom, chap. xxxv. against the lofty ones of Israel, chap. xxxvi. with a promise of their restoration to their own land, by the type of the dry bones, chap. xxxvii. against other enemies of the church of God, under the name of Gog and Magog, chap. xxxviii, xxxix. And from thence he describes the rebuilding of the temple, as a sure confirmation to his captive countrymen, that their captivity should have an end, and they should return to their own country.

Of the deaths of these two eminent prophets the Holy Scripture gives no account, either as to time, place, or manner. But others tell us, that the prophet Jeremiah was stoned to death in Egypt by the people; and we have reason to think it was done by his own people (the runnagade Jews that fled to Egypt against his counsel and God's command, and took him with them against his will). For the Egyptians, we are told, being freed by his prayers from those water-serpents (called crocodiles) which infested them, had him in great honour; which they testified by burying him in one of the royal sepulchres, as is delivered by Je-
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rom in his life, and by Dorotheus bishop of Tyre, in his synopsis of the lives and deaths of the prophets and apostles.

As for the prophet Ezekiel, he is said to have been slain in Chaldea, by a prince of the people of Israel, whom he reprov'd for worshipping images. *Dorothei Synopsis.*

Toward the latter end of Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's time, is the prophet Obadiah placed by some. His prophecy (which of all is the shortest) is directly against Edom, the posterity of Esau, against whom both those other prophets also denounced the judgments of the Lord, Jer. xlix. and Ezek. xxv. and Jeremiah almost in the same words, ver. 14, 15, 16. But this prophet Obadiah assigns the particular cause why Esau should be cut off for ever, namely for his violence against his brother Jacob, ver. 10. Jerom, in his prologue to the book of Obadiah, tells us, the Hebrews hold this prophet Obadiah to be the same man, who, in the days of Ahab king of Israel, hid and fed an hundred of the Lord's prophets, by fifty in a cave, to preserve them from the cruel rage of persecuting Jezebel. But that carries in it no probability of truth, unless this prophet had lived much earlier; for from Ahab's time till this, is about three hundred years.

THE

BOOK

OF THE

PROPHET

DANIEL.

THE prophet Daniel (whose story next follows, and should have come somewhat sooner, but that I was unwilling to break the course of Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's story) was before this time * grown into great favour in the Babylonish court, and in great fame among the Chaldeans, and was eminent in the church of God, both for his piety and his wisdom, Ezek. xiv. 14. and chap. xxviii. 3.

I noted before, that in the first captivity of Judah under Jehoiakim their king, Daniel, being then but a child, was carried to Babylon among the captives, with his three friends and companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; who being selected from among the rest, by Ashpenaz master of the eunuchs, had new names given them at the king's command, as a badge of their slavery; Daniel being called Belteshazzar; Hananiah, Shadrach; Mishael, Meshach; and Azariah, Abednego; and that they were trained up and instructed for three years in the language and learning of the

* Daniel i.

Chaldeans, in order to fit them for the king's presence and service; the king allowing a daily provision of meat and wine from his own table for their sustenance and encouragement.

But Daniel, proposing in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat or wine (some of which perhaps might be unclean in kind, as others polluted by some superstitious ceremonies) requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might be excused from feeding thereon; and God had brought Daniel into so much favour with the prince of the eunuchs, that he seemed willing to gratify him in what he desired; only he objected the danger he might incur from the king, if, for want of good diet, Daniel and his three friends (for they were of the same mind with him therein) should look worse than their fellows when they should appear before the king.

But Daniel prevailed with Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over him and his companions, to give them only pulse and water for their food, and prove them with that but for ten days, and deal with them afterwards as he should see cause, upon comparing their countenances with the countenances of those others that did eat of the portion of the king's meat.

At the ten days end, when they came together, these conscientious pulse-eaters appeared fairer and fatter in flesh, than any of those others who had fed on the royal dainties. Whereupon their purveyor kept back for the future the provision of meat and wine which was allotted them, and left them to their desired pulse and water.

This their religious abstinence and self-denial was so acceptable to God, that he endued them with knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom, and furnished Daniel with understanding in visions and dreams; so that when, at the end of the three years, they were brought before the king, he communing with them, found them by far to excel, in wisdom and understanding, all the magicians and astrologers that were in his realm.

It was not long ere occasion was offered * for Daniel to give a specimen of his skill: for king Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed a dream, which left an impression of trouble upon his spirit, but when he awaked, he could not recollect the

* Dan. ii. A. M. 3426.

matter of his dream : he commanded the magicians, astrologers, forcerers, and Chaldeans (that is, those of the Chaldeans who more especially pretended to divinations) to be called, that they might shew him what the dream was. They excused themselves from telling him the dream ; but readily offered to shew him the interpretation of it, if he would tell them what it was that he had dreamed. That, he told them, he could not, for the thing was gone from him ; and therefore he required them to tell him both the dream and the interpretation thereof, upon pain of being cut to pieces, and their houses made a dunghill, if they would not ; yet promising them, that if they shewed him the dream and the interpretation thereof, they should receive of him gifts and rewards, and great honour.

They answered him just as they did before : ‘ Let the king tell his servants the dream (said they) and we will shew the interpretation of it.’ The king looking upon this to be but a sort of dodging with him, replied, ‘ I know certainly that ye would gain time, because ye see the thing is gone from me ; but if ye will not make known the dream to me, there is but one decree for you : for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed ; therefore tell me the dream, and by that I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof.’

The Chaldeans hereupon alledged for themselves, that that which the king required of them was a rare thing ; such as no man upon the earth could shew, nor any, except the gods only, whose dwelling is not with flesh (that is, who are mere spiritual beings) : and that no king, lord, or ruler, ever asked such a thing of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean. This put the king into such a rage, that he gave command that all the wise men of Babylon (that is, they who professed magical wisdom) should be destroyed ; and without more ado sent forth a decree, that all those wise men should be slain : whereupon Daniel and his three friends were sought for by the undistinguishing Babylonians, to be slain also among the magicians.

But when Daniel heard of it, he wisely and considerately addressed himself to Arioch, the captain of the king’s guard (or chief marshal, unto whom the slaughter of the wise men was committed), asking him, ‘ Why the decree of the king for that execution was so hasty.’ And having received from Arioch a more particular account of the matter, Daniel went

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in, and besought the king to give him time, and he would shew him both the dream and the interpretation of it.

Having obtained some time of the king, Daniel went to his house, and acquainted his companions (Hananiah, Misrael, and Azariah) with the whole matter, that they might join with him in prayer to the God of heaven, that he would shew mercy to them in revealing this great secret, that so they might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. And the Lord was pleased graciously to answer their supplication, and to reveal the secret to Daniel in a night-vision.

He therefore, having returned his acknowledgment to God in an hymn of thanksgiving and praise, went unto Arioch, whom the king had commanded to destroy the wise men of Babylon, and desired him not to destroy any of them, but to bring him in before the king, and he would open to the king the interpretation of his dream.

Arioch, glad, as it seems, to be excused from such bloody work, made haste to bring Daniel to the king, who presently asked him, if he was able to make known to him the dream which he had seen, and the interpretation thereof.

Daniel thereupon told the king, that the secret which he had demanded was above the reach of all the wise men, astrologers, magicians, and soothsayers to open: but that there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, who by this dream would make known to him what should be in the latter days.

Then modestly premising, that this secret was not revealed to him for any wisdom that he had more than others, but for the sakes of those who might receive benefit by the interpretation thereof, and that he might understand the thoughts of his heart, he thus began to declare the dream:

‘ As for thee, O king, said he, when thy thoughts came up into thy mind upon thy bed concerning what should come to pass hereafter, thy dream, and the visions of thy head were these:

‘ Thou sawest a great image stand before thee, whose brightness was excellent, but the form thereof terrible. The head of this image was of fine gold, his breast and arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron, and part of clay. Thou sawest till a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, which smiting the image upon the feet, that were of iron and clay, brake them to pieces. And then was the iron, the

‘ clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor, and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.’

This, said Daniel, is the dream, and now will we tell the king the interpretation thereof, which is this :

‘ Thou, O king, art a king of kings; for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; so that wheresoever the children of men dwell (an hyperbolical expression) the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou therefore art this head of gold. After thee (that is, after the monarchy shall be ended which thou hast erected) another kingdom shall arise, as much inferior to thee as silver is to gold. And after that, a third kingdom (emblemized by brass) which shall bear rule over all the earth. But the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron, and shall bruise and break in pieces the other kingdoms, like as iron breaks all the other metals. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potter’s clay, and part of iron; the kingdom shall be divided, and shall be partly strong like the iron, and partly broken and weak as the clay. So that, although they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men (thinking to strengthen themselves by marriage alliances) yet they shall not cleave firmly one to the other, even as iron and clay do not firmly mix.

‘ But in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. And that kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

‘ And whereas thou sawest that the stone, which broke in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold, was cut out of the mountain without hands; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: for the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.’

No sooner had Daniel thus opened the dream, and the interpretation thereof, but king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipping Daniel, commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. Which that

Daniel

Daniel refused, and instructed the king to direct his devotions to God, may be gathered (though it be not expressed) from the king's answering and saying to Daniel, 'Of a truth, your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret.'

Then did the king make Daniel a great man, even ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon; and not only gave him many great gifts, but, at his request, set his three friends (Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah) over the affairs of the province of Babylon under him; but Daniel himself sat in the gate of the king; which is a periphrasis of his being next in authority to the king.

But after this (how long after it is somewhat uncertain, probably about four years *) this haughty king Nebuchadnezzar, puffed up with his victories over the Jews, the Egyptians, and others (and perhaps more elevated in his own thoughts of himself, from the interpretation given to his dream, whereby he was compared to the golden head of that terrible image which in his sleep he had seen) caused an image or statue of gold to be made, of an extraordinary height and bigness; for it was threescore cubits high (which, at the least, was thirty yards; the common cubit containing half a yard) and six cubits in breadth.

This monstrous image he set up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon, and summoned the princes, governors, captains, judges, treasurers, counsellors, sheriffs, and other officers, to come to the dedication of the image; who being assembled together, and standing before the image, an herald made proclamation thus:

'To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that whensoever ye shall hear the sound of the cornet, or trumpet, and other musical instruments, ye shall fall down, and worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up, upon pain of being cast into a burning fiery furnace.'

Upon this proclamation, and at the sounding of the musick, all the people that were present of the several nations and languages that were subject to Nebuchadnezzar, fell down and worshipped this golden image; the poor captive Jews only excepted, who for conscience sake were dissenters.

* Dan. iii. A. M. 3430.

Some of the Chaldeans observing that the Jews did not conform to this public worship, turned informers against them, complaining of them to the king. And not thinking it advisable to venture at first upon Daniel, who they knew was highest in the king's favour, they impeached Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (whom, for their advancement in the government, they envied); telling the king that these three Jews, whom he had set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, regarded him not; they served not his gods, nor worshipped the golden image which he had set up.

Though Nebuchadnezzar was greatly enraged that any should dare to disobey his decree; yet, from an innate principle of natural justice, he would not condemn them unheard. Therefore he gave command that they should be brought before him: and being brought, he himself examined them, saying, 'Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that is charged against you? Do ye not serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?' Then taking for granted that they did not, and intending to give them this for a warning, he added; 'If for the future ye be ready, at the sound of the musick, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good; but if ye do not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God (added this impious king) that shall deliver you out of my hands?'

So presumptuous a speech struck these good men with a greater abhorrence of the idol. Wherefore they boldly told the king, they were not careful to answer him in that matter: 'For if it be so (said they) that thou shouldst be suffered to cast us into the fiery furnace, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from being hurt therein, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if he would not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.'

This resolute answer put Nebuchadnezzar into such a fury, that the form of his countenance was changed; and in his heat giving order that the furnace should be heated seven times hotter than ordinary, he commanded some of the strongest men in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and cast them into the fiery furnace.

Accordingly the soldiers bound them (in their clothes, even with their hats on) and cast them into the flaming furnace; and though the heat was so violent, that it slew them that

cast

cast them in, yet they falling down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace had no harm; but their bands loosing there, they walked in the midst of the fire.

This marvellous fight so astonished king Nebuchadnezzar (who, to satiate his revenge, was present at this barbarous execution) that, rising up in haste, he said to his officers, 'Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?' Which they confirming, 'Lo, (said he) I see four men loose, walking without hurt in the midst of the fire, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.'

Then coming nearer (as near as he durst) to the mouth of the furnace, he spake to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, saying, 'Ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither.' Whereupon they came forth out of the midst of the fire, and the princes, governors, and captains, with the king's counsellors, and other spectators, as well as the king himself, saw that the fire had no power upon their bodies; for not an hair of their heads was singed, neither were their coats discoloured, nor had they so much as the smell of fire upon them.

The king thereupon, being filled with admiration, brake forth in this manner. 'Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him;' who, notwithstanding the king's threats, have yielded up their bodies to the flames, rather than they would serve or worship any other God than their own God. 'Therefore (said he) I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language, who shall speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill, because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.'

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon; which, no doubt, was a great disappointment and trouble to those that envied them for their preferment before.

After this*, king Nebuchadnezzar, being at rest (from all his enemies) and flourishing in his palace, had another dream which frightened him, and his musings afterwards about it troubled him.

This was not so difficult a case as the former; for then he had quite forgot his dream, but now he so well remembered

* Dan. iv. A. M. 3436.

it, that he could give a distinct account of it. And because his magicians had told him before, that if he would relate his dream to them, they would not fail to shew him the interpretation of it, he, holding it needless to trouble Daniel again, sent for the wise men of Babylon (which general title comprehended all the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, diviners, and soothsayers) and told his dream to them. But they were all at a loss again, and could no more tell him the meaning of this dream, than they could tell him the dream itself before; so that at last, to their shame, Daniel was forced to be sent for again.

Daniel being come in before him, the king, by way of introduction to the matter, thus spake unto him: 'O Belteshazzar (for that was the name the prince of the eunuchs had at first given him, answerable to the name of Nebuchadnezzar's god) master of the magicians (so the king had made him, chap. ii. 48.) because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and that therefore no secret is too hard for thee to trouble thee, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.' Then proceeding to relate the dream, he said, 'Thus were the visions of my head upon my bed:

'I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached to heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth. The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all. The beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. I saw also in the visions of my head upon my bed, and behold, a watcher, and an holy one (or an holy watcher or angel) came down from heaven, and crying aloud, said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches. Nevertheless, leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him, and let seven times pass over him. This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones;

ones; to the intent that the living may know, that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

This (said Nebuchadnezzar) is the dream that I have seen. And now do thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof; for all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to do it; but thou art able, because the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.

When Daniel had heard this dream, he stood astonished for about the space of an hour, and his thoughts troubled him; not so much from the difficulty of interpreting the dream, as for the fearful judgment which he saw was portended by it to the king. This consternation in him the king observing, said to Daniel, Let not the dream, nor the interpretation thereof trouble thee, but declare it freely, and without fear, be it what it will.

My lord (replied Daniel) I wish this inauspicious dream might belong to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies:

For the tree that thou sawest, which grew and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; whose leaves were fair, and whose fruit much, so that in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation; it is thou, O king, who art grown and become strong, for thy greatness is grown and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion unto the end of the earth. And whereas thou sawest a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him: this is the interpretation, O king, and this is a decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord the king, They shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven; and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou knowest that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

‘ will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump
 ‘ of the tree roots; it shews the kingdom shall be sure
 ‘ unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the Lord
 ‘ of heaven doth rule.

‘ And now (said Daniel) that I have shewed thee the
 ‘ interpretation of the dream, let my counsel, O king, be
 ‘ acceptable to thee, which is, that thou break off thy sins
 ‘ by righteousness, and thy iniquities by shewing mercy to
 ‘ the poor (meaning perhaps the poor captives, his bre-
 ‘ thren the Jews) if it may be a lengthening of thy tran-
 ‘ quillity.’

It was not long before the judgment foreshewed by this
 dream was executed upon king Nebuchadnezzar *. For at
 the end of twelve months, as he was walking in his royal
 palace of Babylon, he vauntingly said, ‘ Is not this great
 ‘ Babylon, which I have built for the house of the kingdom,
 ‘ by the might of my power, and for the honour of my
 ‘ majesty !’

Scarce was the word out of his mouth, when a voice from
 heaven was heard to say, ‘ Unto thee, O king Nebuchad-
 ‘ nezzar, it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from thee ;
 ‘ and they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling
 ‘ shall be with the beasts of the field. — They shall make
 ‘ thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over
 ‘ thee, until thou knowest that the Most High ruleth in
 ‘ the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.’
 And thereupon was he, in the same hour, driven from the
 company of men, and did eat grass as oxen ; and his body
 was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown
 like eagles feathers, and his nails like birds claws.

Thus was this haughty king punished for his presumptuous
 pride. But at the end of the days (appointed as well for
 his instruction as his correction) lifting up his eyes to heaven
 (from whence he had by this time learned his only help must
 come) his understanding returned unto him, and then he
 blessed the Most High, and praised and honoured him that
 liveth for ever ; whose dominion he now acknowledged to
 be an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from genera-
 tion to generation. And that all the inhabitants of the earth
 are justly reputed as nothing in comparison of him ; who in
 the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth,

doth

doth according to his will, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou?

When therefore his reason was restored unto him, and he was qualified for government again,* his princes and counsellors (the same perhaps that had deposed him) sought unto him, and he was re-established in his kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto him.

And then, as an acknowledgment both of his own great sin, and God's greater mercy to him, he published a declaration, directed,

TO ALL PEOPLE, NATIONS AND LANGUAGES,
THAT DWELL IN ALL THE EARTH.

Wherein, having premised that he thought it good to shew or set forth the signs and wonders which the high God had wrought towards him, he related the whole course of the matter at large (to wit, the dream, the interpretation of it, and the fulfilling thereof upon him, as is before expressed) and then concluded:

‘ Now I Nebuchadnezzar do praise, extol, and honour the
‘ King of heaven; all whose works are truth, and his ways
‘ judgment; and those that walk in pride (as I did) he is
‘ able to abase.’

Of the time or manner of this king's death, we have not any account in the Holy Scriptures.

He is supposed not to have lived long after his restoration, but to have left his throne to his son Evil Merodach, who is thought to have supplied his place in the government, during the time that he herded with the beasts.

This king Evil Merodach, when he came to have the government entirely in his own hands,† took compassion of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and released him from his imprisonment, in the seven-and-thirtieth year of his captivity; and treating him kindly, not only changed his prison-garments, and assigned him a constant daily allowance for his own maintenance during his life, but gave him the precedence of all the other kings his subjects that were with him in Babylon.

* A. M. 3197. † 2 Kings xxv. Jer. xxxii. A. M. 3446.

This is all the account we have in sacred history of this king Evil Merodach, to whom succeeded his voluptuous son Belshazzar.

In his first year it was, that Daniel had his dream and vision of the four beasts, representing the four monarchies related in his 7th chapter. And in the third year of his reign, Daniel had that remarkable vision of the ram and the he-goat, with the interpretation thereof, set forth in chapter viii. to which two chapters I refer the reader for a particular account of each.

After which (though the relation of it is placed before) this luxurious king, making a great feast to a thousand of his lords, commanded to have the golden and silver vessels (which his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple at Jerusalem) brought forth, that he and his princes, with his wives and concubines, might drink wine therein; which accordingly was done. * And (although, as other histories inform us, the city was at that time straitly besieged) they caroused and drank wine, and in their cups praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

But in the midst of this their profane revelling came forth the fingers of a man's hand, and wrote upon the plaster of the wall and of the king's palace; and the king seeing the part of the hand that wrote, was struck with so great amazement and terror, that his countenance was changed, his joints loosened, his knees smote one against the other, and he was much troubled in his mind concerning it.

Wherefore he called earnestly to have the astrologers, Chaldeans, and sooth-sayers brought in, that they might read that writing, and shew him the interpretation thereof; promising that whosoever did it, should for his reward be clothed in scarlet, wear a chain of gold about his neck, and be the third ruler in the kingdom. But alas! the king's wise men were in this case all fools; for so far were they from shewing him the interpretation of that writing, that not one among them all could read it.

This put them all, both king and lords, into so great fright and disorder, that the old queen, (probably the dowager of king Nebuchadnezzar) hearing the noise they made, came into the banqueting-house among them, and sa-

* Dan. v.

luting the king, said unto him, ' Let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed on this occasion; for there is a man in thy kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. And in the days of thy grandfather, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, being found in him, thy grandfather Nebuchadnezzar made him master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; this is Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Wherefore let him be called, and he will both read it, and shew the interpretation; for an excellent spirit, with knowledge and understanding to interpret dreams, to unfold hard sentences, and resolve doubts, hath been found in him.'

Daniel hereupon being brought in, the king told him he had received a fair character of him, for excellent wisdom and understanding, in giving interpretations and resolving doubts. Then laying open the inability of his own wise men, he made Daniel an offer of the same reward which he had before made to them, in case he should read and interpret the writing.

Daniel (not charlishly, but modestly) answered, ' Let thy gifts be to thyself (or keep thy gifts to thyself) and give thy rewards to another (as much as to say, I expect not any gift or reward from thee); yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation.'

But before he would do that, he put the king in mind of the dealings of God with his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar, thereby preparing him to see and acknowledge the justice of God upon him and his house; and thus he began:

' O thou king, said he, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy grandfather a kingdom, and majesty and glory, and honour. And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. So great and absolute was his power, that whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. He was driven from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses. He was fed with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the most high God

‘ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. And thou his grandson, O Belshazzar, though thou knewest all this, hast not humbled thine heart, but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven. And at thy command thy servants have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drank wine in them. And thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which neither see, hear, nor understand; but the God in whose hand thy breath is, and who has power over all thy ways, hast thou not glorified. Then, or thereupon, the part of the hand (which thou hast seen) was sent from him, and this writing (which neither thou nor any of thy wise men can read) was written.’

Then read Daniel the writing, which was this :

MENE MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

And in the repeating it, putting PERES instead of UPHARSIN, (as signifying the same) he thus interpreted the words :

‘MENE, God hath numbered thy kingdom (that is, the term of thy kingdom) and finished it.’

The doubling of which word imports certainty of the thing.

‘TEKEL, Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.’

‘PERES, Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.’

Though we cannot suppose Belshazzar was pleased with this interpretation; yet we find he had so much justice and honour as to make good his promise; for at his command, they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and by proclamation declared him the third ruler in the kingdom.

But Belshazzar’s reign after this was but short. God, according to the hand-writing, had numbered it, and finished it. For that very night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain by the Medes that at that time besieged Babylon; who taking the advantage, while the Chaldeans had been thus revelling, and were overcharged with wine, to divide the river Euphrates, possessed themselves of the city, and surprised the court; and Darius the Mede, being about sixty-two years old, (by the help of his son-in-law, the great Cyrus) took upon him the kingdom.

As

As soon as Darius was settled on the throne,* he appointed one hundred and twenty princes to be over the whole kingdom; and set three presidents over these, to whom they should give account of affairs, that the king might neither have trouble, nor sustain damage.

Of these three presidents, Daniel was the first, or had the chief place. For because an excellent spirit was observed to be in him, the king not only preferred him above the rest of the presidents and princes, but thought to set him over the whole realm.

This begat high emulation in the other presidents and princes; who grudging that Daniel, a stranger, and a captive, should be so great in the royal favour, to be thus raised above them, conspired to work his ruin.

And first, they sought to find some occasion against him, concerning his publick administration in the government; but he was so faithful, and so exactly careful and diligent therein, that they could find no fault nor error in him.

Whereupon, concluding they should find no occasion against him, except it should be concerning the exercise of his religion in the law of his God (wherein he differed and dissented from them), they consulted together how to lay a snare for him in that respect. They knew he stood too fair in the favour, and strong in the affection of the king, to be directly struck at, therefore they contrived a way to give him a side blow.

They went together in a body to the king; and after the common salutation [King Darius, live for ever!] they thus addressed him:

* All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors and the princes, the counsellors and the captains (the whole estate, civil and military) have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, That whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man, for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into a den of lions. Now therefore, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.

The king, misled at first by a false suggestion in the beginning or preamble of the bill, that all the presidents (whereof Daniel he knew was one, and the chief) had agreed

to it; and not suspecting any treacherous dealing, but taking it for a testimony of their great affection and high veneration for him at his entrance to the throne, without any hesitation consenting to their request, forthwith signed this bill for conformity, and thereby passed it into a statute or decree.

When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and (though worldly policy might have suggested to him, that, since the decree was but for thirty days, he might, for self-preservation from so certain and cruel a punishment, have forborne praying for that time, at least publicly; and if he must needs pray, have prayed so privately in his closet, that no man should have been able to have convicted him; yet he) not altering in the least his accustomed course, but kneeling upon his knees in his chamber, with his windows open towards Jerusalem, prayed three times a day, and gave thanks before his God, just as he was wont to do before the decree was made.

They who had set this trap for him, were not wanting to watch him, that they might inform against him. And having quickly taken him in the act, they went to the king, and having put him in mind of the decree he had lately made, and drawn him to acknowledge that, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, it was unalterable; they complained of Daniel, that he, (who was but one of the children of the captivity of Judah) in contempt of both the king and the law, had made his petition three times a day, not to the king, but to his own God.

The king now too late saw their design; and being sore displeased (not only with them, but even with himself) that he had been thus over-reached by them, he set himself heartily to save Daniel, and laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him. But the conspiring princes held him to it; for they, being all assembled together, said to him: Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is such, that no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.

The king therefore being fain, though very unwillingly, to yield to them, they brought Daniel *; and (after the king, unwittingly prophesying, had said unto him, 'Thy God, whom thou serveest continually, will deliver thee') they cast him into the den of lions; and for their satisfaction, that they

* A. M. 3471.

might be assured that neither the king, nor any of the people (to whom Daniel, for his great wisdom, justice, and other virtues, was very dear) might privately rescue him, a stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den, and sealed not only with the king's own signet (whom in this case, they could hardly confide in) but with the signet of his lords also.

Then went the sorrowful king to his palace, where he passed the night in fasting and watching; and rising very early in the morning, went in haste to the den of the lions. Whither being come, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel; 'O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?'

'Yes, O king, replied Daniel, my God hath sent his angel, who hath shut the lions mouths, that they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.'

Exceeding glad was the king that Daniel had been preserved, and commanded that he should be taken up out of the den. Which being done, the king commanded that Daniel's accusers should be brought and cast into the lions den, they, with their wives and children; between whom and Daniel this difference quickly appeared, that whereas the lions would not touch Daniel, they fell eagerly on these, and having the mastery of them, brake their very bones in pieces, and that before they came to the bottom of the den.

Upon this miraculous deliverance of Daniel, king Darius published the following proclamation:

'TO ALL PEOPLE, NATIONS, and LANGUAGES, that dwell in all the earth, peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, stedfast for ever. His kingdom is that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall remain unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.'

In the first year of this king Darius*, the prophet Daniel, understanding by books the number of the years, concerning which the word of the Lord had come to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desola-

tions of Jerufalem (Jer. xxv. 12. and chap. xxix. 10.) ; and thereupon humbling himfelf with fafting, and in fackcloth and afhes, to feek the Lord by prayer and fupplications, with confeffion of fins, particular and general ; he was informed by the angel Gabriel concerning the feventy weeks and other myfterious numbers. Which, though explained then to him, remain (at leaft fome of them) myfterious ftill to many, and need a Gabriel (a man of God) to give the genuine meaning of them.

But Daniel flourifhed, not only through the reign of this king Darius, but in the reign alfo of his fon-in-law Cyrus *. In whole third year he had that extraordinary vifion, relating more efpecially to the latter times of the Jewish ftate, fet forth in the xth, xith, and xiith chapters of his prophecy ; which is the laft account the holy text gives of him. Of his death alfo the Holy Scripture is filent. But he is faid by others to have died a natural death in the land of the Chaldeans, and to be honourably buried there, being laid by himfelf in the royal fepulchre. *Dorothei Synopfis.*

* But when or wherefoever this holy prophet died (for Dorotheus is not greatly to be relied on, unlefs confirmed by better authority) he had the fatisfaction to fee (before his death) liberty given for the return of his captive-brethren, and for the rebuilding of the temple at Jerufalem. The account of which we muft feek from the learned fcribe Ezra.

* Dan. x.

THE BOOK OF EZRA

Containing an History of about forty-nine Years.

IN the first year of Cyrus king of Persia * that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah the prophet (Jer. xxix. 10.) might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of that king, so that he made proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing after this manner :

‘ Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of
‘ heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth ; and
‘ he hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem,
‘ which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people
‘ that is willing to go ? His God be with him, and let
‘ him go up to Jerusalem, and build the house of the Lord
‘ God of Israel, the God who was worshipped in Jerusalem,
‘ for he is the God. And whosoever remaineth behind his
‘ company (for want of ability) let the men of the place
‘ where he sojourneth help him, with silver and with gold,
‘ with goods and with beasts, beside the free-will offering for
‘ the house of God.’

This was that Cyrus, of whom, about two hundred years before, the Lord, by his prophet Isaiah, said by name, 'He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid,' Isa. xliv. 28.

Upon this proclamation, the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, with the priests and the Levites, and all others whose spirit God had stirred up to go, prepared for their journey for Judea, being in number about fifty thousand persons in all, of all sorts, under the conduct of Zerubbabel (called also Zerobabel, and by the Persians named Sheshbazzar) whom king Cyrus had appointed to be their governor. Unto whom also he caused to be delivered the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar, when he brought them from Jerusalem, had put into the house of his gods, of which this good scribe Ezra gives an inventory, chap. i. ver. 9, 10. the sum total whereof amounteth to five thousand and four hundred vessels, ver. 11.

These captive Jews being thus returned, and settled by their governor in their respective cities, they all gathered together, as one man, to Jerusalem, in the seventh month following. * And although they were afraid of the people (that then inhabited the country) yet they built the altar of the God of Israel; and having set it in its place, offered the daily burnt-offering thereon, both morning and evening, according as was commanded in the law of Moses, and kept the several solemn feasts appointed by God to be held in that month.

Which done, they began to hire workmen, and provide timber to be brought by the Zidonians from Lebanon to Joppa, according to the grant they had of king Cyrus for the building of the house of the Lord.

And in the second month of the second year of their return from the captivity †, Zerubbabel the governor, and Jeshua (or Joshua) the chief-priests, encouraging the rest, and appointing surveyors of the work, they began to lay the foundation of the house; the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, singing by turns, and praising and giving thanks unto the Lord, in those words of the Psalmist, 'O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever,' Psal. cxxxvi. 1,

* Ezra iii. † A. M. 3481.

&c. And the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house was laid.

But many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who, being ancient men, had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice, when they saw, by the foundation of this, how much short it was like to come of the former. Thus were the different noises of mourning and rejoicing intermixed and confounded together; so that the people could not distinguish the noise of the shouts for joy, from the noise of weeping. But they had other cause of weeping beside this.

For when their adversaries (those mingled Samaritans who were planted in Samaria, and the other cities of Israel*, in the room of those Israelites whom Salmanesser king of Assyria had long before carried away captive, 2 Kings xvii.) heard that the children of the captivity of Judah had begun to build the temple unto the Lord God of Israel, they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, 'Let us build with you, for we seek your god as well as ye; and we do sacrifice unto him ever since the days of Esarhaddon, king of Assur, who brought us up hither.'

But Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, gave them this short answer: 'Ye have nothing to do with us, to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together, will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.'

This answer so displeased the people of the land, that they set themselves thenceforward to discourage the Jews, and disturb them in their building. And finding that did not do, but that the Jews went on notwithstanding, they hired counsellors against them to frustrate their purpose.

This hiring of counsellors is supposed to be a seeing or bribing some of the prime ministers of state in the Persian court; that they, by misrepresenting the Jews and their undertaking, might alienate the mind of the king from them; as, it seems, they did all the days of Cyrus, (who making war in Scythia, had left the government at home to his son Cambyses during his absence) and until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

These Samaritan adversaries wrote letters also against the Jews to several of the kings of Persia successively; as to king

Ahasuerus in the beginning of his reign, and to Artaxerxes before. The tenor of which letter, directed to Artaxerxes, from Rekum the chancellor, and Shimshai the secretary, and the rest of their companions, in the name of the nation of that mixed people, whom the great and noble Asnapper (or Esar-haddon) had brought over and set in the cities of Samaria, with all the rest that were on that side the river, was thus :

‘ Be it known unto the king, that the Jews, which came
 ‘ up from thee to us, are building Jerusalem, that rebellious
 ‘ and wicked city ; and having laid the foundations, are set-
 ‘ ting up the walls thereof. But if this city be builded,
 ‘ and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute
 ‘ and custom ; whereby the king’s revenue will be lessened.
 ‘ Now because we have maintenance from the king’s palace,
 ‘ we held it not meet for us to see the king’s dishonour, and
 ‘ conceal it ; and therefore have we sent and certified the
 ‘ king thereof, that search may be made in the book of the
 ‘ records of thy fathers : so shalt thou find and know, that
 ‘ this hath been a rebellious city, and that they have moved
 ‘ sedition within the same of old time, for which cause it was
 ‘ destroyed. And we further certify the king, that if this
 ‘ city be built again, and the walls thereof set up, it will be
 ‘ a means that thou shalt have no portion on this side the
 ‘ river.’

To this letter the king returned answer (directed to Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai their secretary, with their companions that dwelt in Samaria, and unto the rest beyond the river) to this effect :

‘ The letter, which ye sent unto us, hath been plainly read
 ‘ before me ; and at my command, search having been made,
 ‘ it is found, that this city of old time hath made insurrection
 ‘ against kings ; and that rebellion and sedition hath been
 ‘ made therein. There have been mighty kings also over
 ‘ Jerusalem, which have ruled over all countries beyond the
 ‘ river ; and toll, tribute, and custom have been paid to
 ‘ them. Give ye now therefore commandment to cause these
 ‘ men to cease, and that the city be not builded until further
 ‘ commandment be given from me. Take heed now, that
 ‘ ye fail not to do this, lest the king be endamaged.’

When the copy of this letter was read before Rehum and Shimshai, with their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews there, and made them to cease by
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force and power. Thus was a stop put to the building of the house of God at Jerusalem; and the work ceased, unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia. Which how long it was, is somewhat uncertain, and that uncertainty arises much from the different names given by historians to the same Persian kings.

This Darius (in whose second year the work went on again) is generally taken to be the son of queen Esther; whose story falling within this interval, wherein the building of the temple was hindered, we are the better at leisure now to enter upon it; and thus it was.

T H E
B O O K
O F
E S T H E R.

A HASUERUS king of Persia (mentioned before by Ezra, chap. iv. *) and supposed to be the son of Darius Hystaspis, in the third year of his reign made a feast unto all his princes and servants, the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and governors of his provinces, whereof he had an hundred twenty and seven under his dominion. And to shew his great riches and honour, he held this feast for an hundred and fourscore days together, which is much about half a year. And when that was ended, he made another feast unto all the people, great and small, that were in his royal city Shushan. Which latter feast he kept for seven days in the court of the garden belonging to his palace; where they were entertained under canopies (or pavilions) of white, green, and blue, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple, to silver rings in pillars of marble. The beds (whereon they eat; for in those times beds were used to eat on, as tables are now) were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of porphyry, alabaster, and marble of divers colours.

Wine they had in abundance out of the king's cellars, and that too filled in vessels of gold, every one differing from another, to set forth the state and magnificence of the king;

but that which crowned the feast was, that the drinking was according to the law, which provided that none should be compelled or pressed to drink; the king having given express charge to all the officers of his house, that every man should be left to his own pleasure for drinking.

The queen also, whose name was Vashti (thought by some, but with no great likelihood, to be the daughter of Cyrus, and sister to Cambyfes) made a feast for the women, as the king had done for the men, in the royal house which belonged to the king. And that, perhaps, might be one reason, why the king kept his popular feast abroad, under pavilions or canopies, ver. 6. so that there was feasting within doors and without.

On the seventh day of the king's feast to the people, when the king's heart was merry with wine, he sent his seven chamberlains to bring queen Vashti before him, with the crown royal, that he might shew the people before they parted, and the princes, her beauty; for she was fair to look on.

But she (whether not liking to be made so publick a spectacle) or having in her feasting tasted too liberally of the wine; for her name signifies drinking, unadvisedly refused to come at the king's command: which so publick affront put the king in so great a passion, that in the heat of his anger he consulted his seven princes (who, as prime counsellors, that understood the constitution of the government, were next unto him in the kingdom) what should be done, according to law, unto the queen, for her contempt in disobeying the king's command.

Memucan thereupon, who was one, and the last, of these seven princes (a married man we may suppose) told the king, ' That queen Vashti had not done wrong to the king only, ' but to all the princes also; and indeed to all the people that ' were in all the king's provinces: for, said he, when this ' deed of the queen's shall come abroad, and it shall be known ' unto all the women, that king Ahasuerus commanded queen ' Vashti to be brought in before him, and she refusing, would ' not come; they will learn, by her example, to despise their ' husbands, and the ladies of Persia and Media will urge this ' as a precedent unto all the king's princes, and that will ' give occasion for too much contempt on the one hand, and ' wrath on the other, to rise between them. If therefore ' (added he) it please the king, let there go forth a royal ' commandment from him, and let it be enrolled amongst the

‘ laws of the Persians and of the Medes (which are unalterable) that Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she; and when this decree of the king’s shall be published throughout all this great empire, all the wives will give honour to their husbands, both great and small.’

Memucan, I observed, was the last in order of the seven princes, yet he spake first. Whether from thence was taken the custom used amongst our English peers, that in judicial causes the youngest delivers his judgment first, I know not. But this counsel of Memucan, I find, did so well please the king and his princes, that they all consenting, it was forthwith put in execution, and letters were sent into all the king’s provinces; the tenor whereof was, that every man should bear rule over his own house, and that it should be so published in every province, according to the language of every people. And thus, for that time, the men got the upper hand again of the women.

But after the king had slept upon it, and his anger was over, he began to remember Vashti*, both what she had done, and what was decreed against her; which being observed by his servants (who might well conclude, that if she should be received into favour again, she would meditate revenge upon them); they, to divert the king’s mind from running back to her, and to keep up their own interest with him, contrived a project, that the king should appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdoms, who should take up all the fair young virgins they could find, and bring them from all parts to the king’s palace at Shushan; where being put into the house for the women (under the care of Hege, one of the king’s chamberlains, and keeper of the women) they should be furnished with all things necessary to their purification, that from amongst them the king might choose one to be queen instead of Vashti.

A proposal so adapted to the king’s inclination could not choose but find acceptance with him; and being forthwith put in execution, brought many fair maids to the court.

Among those that, on this occasion, were pressed into this service, was the fair Esther, who was also called Hadassah, and in profane authors Atossa.

She was the daughter of one Abihail, a Jew, uncle of Mordecai the Jew, who had been carried captive from Je-

* Esther ii.

rusalem, by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, in the captivity of Jeconiah king of Judah; and her father and mother both dying when she was very young, her cousin Mordecai, who lived in Shushan (at that time the royal city of the Persian empire) took her for his own daughter, and brought her up.

When Esther was brought into the Gynæcem, or house for women, and delivered to Hege (or Hegai) the chamberlain, she pleased him so well, and obtained so much kindness from him, that he appointed seven maids to wait on her; and not only preferred her to the best lodgings in the house, but speedily gave her things for purification, that she might be ready with the foremost.

For the order was, that every one of them should be twelve months in the house of the maidens, to purify and prepare themselves, before they might be brought to the king. Of which time, six months they spent in purifying with oil of myrrh, and the other six with sweet odours. After which they took their turns to go in unto the king, and were furnished by the chamberlain that had the care of them, with whatsoever they desired to have, to set themselves off with. But having spent their night with the king, they returned next morning to another house of the women, under the charge of Shaashgaz, another of the king's chamberlains, who had the care of the king's concubines. And none of them that had once been with the king came any more to him, unless he sent for her again by name.

Esther had not yet discovered her kindred, nor what people she was of; for Mordecai had charged her that she should not. But he took care to walk every day before the court of the women's house, that he might understand how she did, and what was like to become of her.

It was in the seventh year of king Ahasuerus his reign, and in the tenth month of that year, that Esther's turn came to go in unto the king. And whereas the other virgins set themselves off with the richest and finest ornaments, that they might be the more acceptable to the king, every one understanding that a crown would be the prize to her that should gain him to herself, Esther being drawn against her will to this, which she knew was a breach of the law of God, and a violation of her religion (and therefore only

(submitted to it, as that which her captive condition had subjected her unto) required nothing of the chamberlain to adorn or set her off, as not desiring to be advanced by such means.

Yet as her native beauty, and courteous deportment, gained her favour from all that beheld her; so the king was so taken with her, that he loved her above all the others; and she obtained such grace and favour in his sight that setting the royal crown upon her head, he made her queen instead of deposed Vashti. And at the celebration of his nuptials with her, he made a great feast unto all his princes and servants, which was called Esther's feast; and for her sake, not only gave gifts according to the magnificence of his state, but for that time eased also the provinces of their tribute.

Her guardian kinsman, Mordecai, had yet no higher preferment, than to sit in the king's gate; which implies (as some think) he had an office at court, though perhaps it might be but that of porter or usher of the hall. For he had charged Esther not to discover her kindred or people; and she still paying the same observance to his commands, as she had always done when she lived with him, had kept it secret: which shews how little ambitious he was of court preferment.

But now an occasion happened, which brought Mordecai, though not suddenly, into greater note in court. For while he sat in the king's gate, he came to understand that Bigtham and Tereſh, two of the king's chamberlains, that kept the door of the king's chamber, sought to lay violent hands upon the king. Of this plot Mordecai forthwith gave notice to queen Esther, and she acquainted the king therewith in Mordecai's name. Whereupon the two chamberlains, being seized and convicted, were both hanged for it; and a record of the whole process was made and entered in the Persian annals, but Mordecai was not presently taken notice of for it.

For the king's mind was too much taken up with a new favourite, whom he advanced on a sudden*, and set his seat above all the princes that were about him. This was Haman, the son of Ammedatha the Agagite, whom some suppose to be descended from Agag, the king of the Ama-

* Esther iii.

lekites, whom the prophet Samuel slew, 1 Sam. xv. 33. But Agag was rather a title of royal office, than name of a person or family.

Upon this advancement of Haman, all the king's servants that were in (or attended at) the king's gate, bowed to and revered Haman, because the king had given command they should do so; only Mordecai bowed not to him, nor did him reverence.

Tremellius and Junius give two reasons for this; one because Haman was of that nation (an Amalekite) against which God had appointed the Jews to have war for ever, Exod. xvii. 14. Deut. xxv. 17. The other (which deserves especial regard) because that honour was due to God only.

Mordecai, it seems, for a while passed in the crowd, without being observed by Haman himself; but the rest of the king's servants, who themselves were forward to crouch to the favourite, began to pick a quarrel with Mordecai, asking him, why he transgressed the king's commandment. And when they had thus urged him from day to day, and saw he regarded not what they said, they, willing to try how he would come off, informed Haman both of his behaviour towards him, and also that he was a Jew.

When haughty Haman understood that Mordecai did not bow nor do him reverence, he was full of wrath, and forthwith meditated revenge. But thinking Mordecai too mean a victim to be sacrificed alone to his ambition, he scorned to lay hands on him only, but contrived how he might destroy with him all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahafuerus, for his sake.

And because this was a great undertaking, Haman's partisans, unto whom he had imparted his purpose, did cast pur (that is the lot) before Haman, from day to day, from the first month to the twelfth, that they might know (saith the marginal note) what month and day should be good to enterprize this thing, that it might have good success.

At length having fixed the time, Haman addressing himself to the king, thus opened the matter to him:

'There is (said he) a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people, in all the provinces of thy kingdom, and their laws are different from all people; neither keep they the king's law.' Thus Haman, from Mordecai's not observing that particular command for bowing to him, fallaciously and maliciously inferred against all the Jews,

Jews, that they kept not the king's laws. 'For which reason (said he) it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. Therefore (added he) if it please the king, let a decree be made, and sent forth in writing, that they be destroyed. And I will pay ten thousand talents of silver (a round sum, amounting to three millions, seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds of English money) to the hands of them that shall have the charge of the business to bring it into the king's treasures.' Upon this, the marginal note in the bible is, 'These be the two arguments which commonly the worldlings and the wicked use toward princes against the godly, that is, the contempt of their laws, and diminishing of their profit, without respect how God is either pleased or displeased.'

The unwary king (too much favourite-ridden, and little thinking that his beloved Esther was one of that people, whom his minion favourite would have destroyed) took off his ring, and gave it unto Haman (as Pharaoh king of Egypt had done to Joseph, Gen. xli. 42.) as a token that he gave him full authority to do what he would in that matter; telling him withal, that he gave him not only the ten thousand talents of silver, which he had offered, but the people also, to do with them as it should seem good unto him.

Haman, having obtained this grant, was not backward to put it in execution. But the king's secretaries were forthwith called for, and letters were written, by Haman's direction, unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people in their respective languages; wherein they were charged to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all Jews both young and old, little children and women, in one day. And the letters bearing date the thirtieth day of the first month, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month was the day appointed for the massacre; and to animate their enemies against them, the spoil of the Jews was given them for a prey.

These letters, being written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's seal, which Haman had gotten for that purpose, were dispatched into all the king's provinces, and the posts hastened out by the king's command. Which done, the king and Haman fell to their cups; but the city Shushan,

from

from whence this decree went forth, was in perplexity about it.

But none was more sensibly affected than good Mordecai *. Who, when he understood what was done, rent his clothes, and putting on sackcloth with ashes, went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry. And because none clothed in sackcloth were allowed to enter into the king's gate, he came and stood before the king's gate to shew his sorrow.

In every province also, whithersoever this bloody decree came, there was (as well there might be) great mourning among the Jews and fasting, with weeping and wailing, and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

Mordecai's walking about in sackcloth was soon taken notice of, and reported anon to queen Esther's servants, who quickly acquainted her with it; at the hearing whereof she was exceedingly grieved (though she did not yet know the cause) and sent him raiment to clothe himself with instead of his sackcloth, but he would not receive it. Whereupon calling for Hatach (one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to wait upon her) she commanded him to go to Mordecai, and bring her word from him what the matter was, and the occasion of it.

With this command Hatach went forth to Mordecai, whom he found in the street of the city, which was before the king's gate. And having acquainted him that he came from the queen to know the cause of his mourning, Mordecai told him of all that had happened; how that Haman had promised to pay a great sum of money into the king's exchequer, that he might have liberty to destroy all the Jews, and that the king had granted it. He gave him also a copy of the decree in writing, that was given at Shushan for the destroying of them; wishing him to shew it unto Esther, and declare the whole matter unto her, and withal to charge her (from him) that she should go in unto the king, and make supplication and request unto him for her people. For it was high time now that it should be known what people she was of.

When Hatach had reported this to queen Esther, she sent him back to Mordecai again, to put him in mind that it was a certain rule, which all the king's servants, and the

* Esther iv.

people of the provinces, did know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, did come unto the king in the inner court, uncalled, was liable by law to be put to death, except such to whom, as a particular favour, the king should hold forth the golden scepter; but that, as for her part, she had not been called to come in unto the king for these thirty days last past. So much was the king taken up with his new favourite.

To this excuse Mordecai roundly returned her this answer; 'Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews; for if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, enlargement and deliverance shall arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed. But consider well what is thy part to do; for who knows, whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?'

This smart message roused the queen. So that forthwith sending to Mordecai again, she wished him to gather together all the Jews that were in Shushan, and with them keep a strict fast for her, without eating or drinking, day or night, for three days together; assuring him, that she and her maidens would fast likewise, and that after that, she would go in unto the king, though it was against the law; and if (added she) I perish, I perish.

Accordingly, when this solemn fast was over, queen Esther, having put on her royal apparel, went and stood in the inner court of the king's house,* over against the royal throne on which the king then sat. And the Lord so disposed the heart of the king, that when he saw queen Esther standing in the court, she obtained favour in his sight, so that he held forth his golden scepter to her. By which, emboldened, she drew near, and having submissively touched the top of the scepter, the king asked her, 'What she would have, and what was her request; adding, for her encouragement, it shall be given thee, even to the half of the kingdom.' She then said, 'If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet which I have prepared for him.'

The king consenting, gave order that Haman (who it seems was not then present) should have notice given him to make haste, that he might answer the queen's invitation:

* Esther v.

so that the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared. And at the banquet of wine the king said to her again, 'What is thy petition? it shall be granted thee; and what is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed.'

Esther, willing to engage the king to her as far as she could before she brake the business, and, for that end desirous to have another opportunity with him, in humble manner answered, 'My petition and request is, if I now have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to answer my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I shall prepare for them to-morrow, and then I will make bold to prefer my petition.'

This being agreed to, they parted; and foolish Haman, tickled with joy, went away with a glad heart; but when, as he went forth, he saw Mordecai at the king's gate, and observed that he stood not up, nor moved for him, his haughty stomach rose, and he was full of indignation against Mordecai. Yet he kept it in as well as he could, until he was come home, and then having gathered his friends together, with Zerech his wife, he, to blazon his happiness, in the first place set forth the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children; then recounting to them all the great things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the rest of the princes and servants of the king; he told them also, that queen Esther did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared, but himself only; and to-morrow, said he, I am invited unto her again with the king. Yet all this (added he) avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sit at the king's gate, and not bow to me.

When Haman had done speaking, his wife and all his friends, concurring with him in their resentment of the affront done him by Mordecai, gave him this advice: 'Let a gallows (said they) be made of fifty cubits high, and to-morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon; and then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet.' This project took so well with Haman, that forthwith he caused the gallows to be made, and set up in readiness.

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But God so ordered the matter, that that night the king could not sleep. Wherefore to divert him, and spend the time that the night might not be tedious to him, he called for the book of the records of the chronicles; and that being read before him, it was found therein that Mordecai had discovered the treason of Bigthan and Teresh, those two chamberlains of the king that guarded his door, who were hanged for designing to lay hands on the king, chap. ii. 21, &c.

When the king heard this, he asked, what honour and dignity had been done to Mordecai for this: and the king's servants, who (as grooms of his chamber) then waited on him, telling him there had been nothing done for him, the king, that he might give further order about it, asked, 'Who is there in the court?'

Just in that juncture was Haman come into the outward court of the king's house, betimes in the morning, to ask leave of the king that he might hang Mordecai on the gallows which he had prepared for him; whom the servants seeing, they told the king that Haman stood in the court; and the king said, 'Let him come in.'

In came Haman, big with hope that he should have his will on Mordecai that morning. But before he could introduce his request, the king prevented him, by asking him a question; which was, 'What should be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour.'

Self conceited Haman, concluding in himself that he was the only man whom the king could delight to honour, resolved to have it in its utmost splendor. Wherefore, in answer to the king's question, he said: 'For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, let the royal apparel be brought, which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: and let this apparel and horse be delivered to one of the king's most noble princes, that he may therewith array the man, whom the king delighteth to honour; and bring him on horse-back through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, THUS SHALL IT BE DONE TO THE MAN WHOM THE KING DELIGHTETH TO HONOUR.'

No sooner had Haman set the terms, but, quite contrary to his expectation and hope, the king said to him,

* Esther vi.

* Make

‘ Make haste, take the apparel and the horse, and do thou just as thou hast said, unto Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king’s gate; let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.’

What a cut was this to proud Haman! yet remedy he had none. The king’s word was a law, and obey it he must, or fare the worse.

Wherefore taking the apparel and the horse, he went and arrayed Mordecai; and having mounted him on the royal steed, brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, ‘ Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.’ Which done, humble Mordecai returned again to the king’s gate; but Haman hastened home to his house, mourning, and (in token thereof) having his head covered.

Being got home, he related to Zeresh his wife, and the rest of his friends, the great disappointment that had befallen him. Which when they had well weighed, they said to him; ‘ If Mordecai, before whom thou hast begun to fall, be of the seed of the Jews, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shall surely fall before him.’

More perhaps they might have said to him, had they not been interrupted by a messenger from the king; for while they were yet talking with him, came the king’s chamberlain to hasten him to the banquet, which queen Esther had prepared for the king and him; to which, we may suppose, he went with an heavy heart, though he put on the best countenance he could to hide it.

When they were come to the banquet of wine,* the king again asked queen Esther, what her petition and request was; assuring her, as before, it should be granted, though it were to the one half of his kingdom.

Esther now thinking it a right time to open her cause, made answer; ‘ If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: for we are sold, both I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish; but if we had been sold for bond-men, and bond women, I had held my tongue; although the enemy could not countervail the king’s damage, in the loss of the tribute we pay.’

* Esther vii.

The king (having forgot, it seems, or not well considered, what Haman had begged, and he had granted) in great displeasure asked, 'Who is he? and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do such a thing?'

The adversary and enemy, replied Esther, is this wicked Haman.

That word put Haman into a terrible fright. Which the king observing, and probably thereupon calling to mind how Haman had surreptitiously gotten the decree from him, for the destroying of the Jews, he arose from the banquet of wine in his wrath, and went into the palace-garden.

Haman from thence concluding that evil was determined against him by the king, stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen (the life of whom, and of all her people, he had so lately conspired against, and determined to take away;) and falling, as a suppliant, upon the bed whereon Esther sat, was found in that posture by the king, when he came in again out of the garden. Who, resenting it as an indignity to himself, that he (a subject, and a criminal) should presume to approach so indecently near the queen; brake forth in this manner, 'Will he force the queen also before me in the house!' Which words were no sooner out of the king's mouth, but the officers that attended, forthwith covered Haman's face, which to him was a sure token of death. And Harbonah, one of the king's chamberlains, whose name signifies destruction (and who had got notice, it seems, of Haman's design against Mordecai) * acquainting the king that Haman had set up a gallows in his own house, fifty cubits high, whereon he intended to have hanged Mordecai, who had deserved so well of the king, the king bid them hang Haman thereon; which immediately they did.

The king's wrath being now by Haman's death appeased, he gave the house of Haman, the Jew's enemy, unto queen Esther the Jew. † And she having now acquainted the king in what relation Mordecai stood to her, the king sent for Mordecai to come before him. And taking off his ring (as he had done before to Haman) he gave it unto Mordecai, and Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

But though Haman was removed, yet were not Esther and the Jews free from danger and from fear; for the de-

* A. M. 3500. † Esther viii.

cree against them stood yet in force. Esther therefore adventured once more to speak before the king on that occasion; and falling down at his feet, besought him, with tears, to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and the wicked device which he had devised against the Jews.

The king thereupon holding forth his golden scepter towards Esther, to encourage her to speak her mind, she arose, and standing before the king, said: 'If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, let something be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces. For how can I endure to see the evil which shall otherwise come upon my people? or how shall I bear to see the destruction of my kindred?'

The king then said to Esther and Mordecai: 'Ye see I have already given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged, because he presumed to lay his hand upon the Jews: Write ye now therefore for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's seal; for as for the former writing, which was written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's seal, that is unalterable, no man can reverse it.'

The king's secretaries being hereupon called, other letters were written according as Mordecai did dictate, and directed both to the Jews, and to the king's lieutenants, the deputies and rulers of the provinces, from India unto Ethiopia, being an hundred and twenty-seven provinces, unto every province and people after their language, and to the Jews according to their language. Which letters contained a grant and authority from the king to the Jews; that upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (which was the day Haman had pitched upon for massacring the Jews) they might gather themselves together in every city where they were to stand up for their lives; and might destroy, slay, and cause to perish all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and take the spoil of them for a prey. And as these letters (bearing date from the palace at Shushan, on the three and twentieth of the third month) were written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's seal; so they were dispatched to the provinces by swift posts with the greatest expedition that could be, and copies thereof speedily published to all the people, that the Jews might have

timely notice, to be ready against that day to stand upon their guard, and avenge themselves on their enemies *.

Then went out Mordecai from the presence of the king, in his royal robes of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and a garment of fine linen and purple. And not only the city of Shushan rejoiced at this turn of the tide; but in every province and city, whithersoever the king's command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, and it was to them a good day. Nay, many of the people of the land turned Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

Now when the fatal day was come, wherein the two opposite decrees were to be put in execution, which was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the Jews, being timely fore-warned, were fore-armed; and gathering themselves together in their cities, throughout all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, they laid so manfully about them on those that did assail them, that no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon the people. And besides that, all the rulers of the provinces, and the king's lieutenants, with the deputies and other officers of the king, helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them also; for Mordecai was great in the king's house, and grew greater and greater; so that his fame went forth throughout all the provinces.

Thus encouraged, the Jews, defending themselves, fell boldly on their enemies, and made great slaughter and destruction of those that hated them; so that in the royal city Shushan they slew five hundred persons, amongst whom were the ten sons of Haman. And in other cities, in the rest of the provinces, they slew and destroyed of their foes to the number of seventy-and-five thousand; but in no place did they meddle with the prey.

An account of the number of the slain in Shushan being brought the same day to the king, he told queen Esther that the Jews had slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan, where his court was kept; by which she might guess what slaughters they had made in the rest of the provinces; and then asked her what further request she had to make; assuring her it should be granted.

* Esther ix.

She,

She, taking encouragement from that word, answered, ' If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan, to do to-morrow also as they have done to-day, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows.'

It was now with her but ask and have; for the king commanded that it should be so done; and a decree accordingly was given forth at Shushan for it. Whereupon Haman's ten sons (who were slain the day before) were hanged; and the Jews at Shushan, gathering themselves together on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month, slew three hundred men more there; but on the prey they did not lay their hand.

For this great deliverance and victory, the Jews, in all parts, testified their gladness, by feasting, and by sending gifts one to another. But the Jews at Shushan, having two days allowed them to avenge themselves on their enemies, whereas the rest of the Jews, in other places, had but one day given them, this caused at the first some difference in the time of this feasting; for the Jews in all other parts of the kingdom, having acquitted themselves on the thirteenth day, kept their rejoicing-feast on the fourteenth. But the Jews at Shushan, being engaged both the thirteenth and fourteenth days in defending themselves, kept the festival for their deliverance on the fifteenth day.

But afterwards, when Mordecai had made a record of this great deliverance, he sent letters unto all the Jews, far and near, throughout all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, to establish it as a standing ordinance among them, that they should keep both the fourteenth and the fifteenth days of the month Adar, yearly, as the days whereon the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month that was turned unto them from sorrow unto joy, and from mourning into a good day. In commemoration whereof, they should make those days days of feasting and rejoicing, and of sending portions one to another, and giving gifts to the poor.

And because Haman had cast pur (that is, the lot), in order to know the most successful time wherein he might consume and destroy the Jews, it was agreed and ordained, that these two days should be called the feast of Purim, and should be solemnly, strictly, and annually kept by all the Jews every-where. In order whereunto, Mordecai, being now advanced to be next in place and power unto the king, wrote unto the Jews about it; and queen Esther wrote also, with all authority, to confirm his letters.

The Jews thereupon, in all places, took it as an ordinance upon them and upon their seed, and upon all such as should join themselves unto them, that they would, without fail, keep those two days at the appointed time every year, in every family, province, and city, to be a memorial of their deliverance to them and to their seed for ever.

The End of the Book of ESTHER.

HERE

HERE FOLLOWS THE REST OF THE

B O O K

OF

E Z R A,

INCLUDING THE TWO PROPHETS

HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH.

ALL this while the building of the temple at Jerusalem* either went not forward at all, or very slowly. The work is said to have ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia, Ezra iv. 24. But of the many of that name, which this was, is not well agreed amongst writers. The more common opinion takes him to be Darius Artaxerxes, surnamed Longimanus, or Longhand, and him to be the son of Darius Hystaspis, or Ahasuerus, by Esther. But it may then occasion some wonder, that so good a woman as queen Esther, and so zealous a Jew as Mordecai, having such power as they had with king Ahasuerus, should not have set the wheel of that work a going in their time.

It was by the encouragement which two of the Lord's prophets gave, that Zerubbabel and the rest applied themselves again to the work, as Ezra informs us, chap. v. 1.

* Ezra v. A. M. 3508.

For all the prophets formerly named being by this time gone to rest, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah were raised up by the Lord in the second year of this king Darius, and sent to prophesy unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem, to stir them up to greater zeal and diligence in the work of the Lord. For they, being disheartened by the opposition they had met with from their ill neighbours on the one hand, and the prohibition from the court on the other, had let up a wrong conceit in their minds, that the time was not yet come wherein the house of the Lord should be built. Wherefore neglecting that, they spent their time in building houses for themselves.

This the prophet Haggai (unto whom the word of the Lord came on the first day of the sixth month, in the second year of king Darius) reproved them for, directing his message to Zerubbabel the governor, and Joshua the high-priest, as the two chiefs or representatives, one of the people, the other of the priests.

Then calling them to consider the many and great disappointments they had met with,* and the unsuccessfulness of their undertakings since they had neglected the Lord's work, he tells them, that all this had happened unto them by God's appointment, who had restrained the fructifying influences of heaven, and thereby rendered the earth unfruitful to them; whereby they had been afflicted with scarcity, want, and famine, because they, now that the Lord had turned their captivity, and brought them back into their own land, had, for fear of man, suffered his house to lie waste, and had employed themselves in building and beautifying their own houses. Wherefore he bid them (loiter no longer, but) go up to the mountain, and bring timber, and build the house; assuring them from the Lord, that if they did so, he would take pleasure in it, and be glorified therein.

This roused up both the governor and the people; who being in fear before the Lord, from the sense of their great neglect, resolved now to obey the voice of the Lord their God by his prophet Haggai. And he, to encourage this good resolution, and hearten them on in it, came to them again, with this short but comforting message, 'I am with you, saith the Lord.' And the Lord at the same time

* Haggai i.

stirring up the spirit of Zerubbabel the governor, and the spirit of Joshua the high-priest, and the spirits of all the remnant of the people, they came and resumed their work in the house of the Lord on the four-and-twentieth day of that sixth month, in the second year of king Darius, after a cessation (as some compute) of about thirty years.

And because the old men, who had seen the former temple in its beauty, * wept at the laying of the foundation of this, when they saw how much short it was likely to be of the former, the prophet Haggai was sent to them again, in the seventh month following, to encourage them to go on cheerfully; assuring them afresh, that the Lord was with them in this their undertaking, and predicting that the Lord would fill this house with glory; so that (how much soever it might come short of the former in bulk and stateliness of structure) the glory of this latter house should be greater than that of the former. Which expositors, not finding in story made good literally, have figuratively applied to the gospel church, where I wish all may see it.

While thus the prophet Haggai was earnestly concerned to hearten on the Jews in the work of rebuilding the temple, the Lord raised up another prophet, to confirm and strengthen them in their undertaking.

This was Zechariah, the son of Barachia, of the family of Iddo; † who beginning to prophesy in the eighth month of the second year of king Darius, first puts them in mind of their fathers disobedience, who, refusing to hearken unto the Lord by his prophets, had highly provoked him to displeasure. Then warning them not to be like their fathers therein, he exhorted them to turn unto the Lord, assuring them that if they did so, the Lord would turn unto them.

By these two prophets thus encouraged, Zerubbabel and Joshua went on with the building, and the workmen plied it diligently. But before they could finish it, Tatnai (the governor on that side the river) and Shethar-Boznai, with their companions (enemies also to the Jews, but not so bitter and implacable as the rest) having gotten notice of their work, came and examined them who had commanded them to build that house, and to make up that wall. Demanding also the names of the men that undertook that building.

By this strict inquiry, it seems, they thought to have scared the Jews and made them give over their work, as

* Haggai ii.

† Zech. i.

they had done formerly. But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, and the prophets of God helped them; so that these enemies of theirs could not now cause them to cease; whereupon the matter was brought before king Darius.

For when Tatnai, the governor on that side of the river, with Shethar-Boznai, and his companions the Apharsachites, saw that the Jews would not be frightened from their work, they wrote a letter to king Darius, to give him an account of the matter, whereof this is the copy:

Unto DARIUS the King, all peace.

‘ Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of Judah, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stone, and timber is laid in the walls; and this work goeth on fast, and prospereth in their hands. Then asked we the elders of the people, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls? We asked their names also, to the intent that we might not only certify thee of the building, but might give thee the names of those among them that were the chief in the work. And thus they returned us answer: We are (said they) the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel did build and set up; but after that our fathers had provoked the Lord God of Israel to wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried away the people unto Babylon. But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon, he made a decree to build this house of God; and the vessels of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that was at Jerusalem, and brought into the temple at Babylon, those did king Cyrus take out of the temple of Babylon, and delivered them unto one whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor, saying, Take these vessels, go carry them into the temple at Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in its place. Whereupon the same Sheshbazzar came, and laid the foundation of the house of God, which is in Jerusalem; and since that time, even until now, hath it been in-building, and

‘ and yet it is not finished. Now therefore, if it seem
 ‘ good to the king, let search be made in the king’s trea-
 ‘ sure house at Babylon, whether it be so that a decree was
 ‘ made by Cyrus the king that this house of God at Je-
 ‘ rusalem should be builded; and let the king send his plea-
 ‘ sure to us concerning this matter.’

When this letter came to the king, * search was there-
 upon made in the archives (or house of the rolls) where
 the records were laid up in Babylon, and there was found
 in Achmetha (or Ecbatana), in the palace that was in the
 province of the Medes, a roll, wherein was a record in
 these terms :

In the first year of Cyrus the king, the same king Cyrus
 made a decree concerning the house of God in Jerusalem,
 of which this was the tenor :

‘ Let the house be builded, the place where they offered
 ‘ sacrifices, and let the foundations be strongly laid; the
 ‘ height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof
 ‘ threescore cubits, with three rows of great stones and a
 ‘ row of timber; and let the expences be given out of the
 ‘ king’s house. And also let the golden and silver vessels
 ‘ of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth
 ‘ out of the temple which was at Jerusalem, and brought
 ‘ unto Babylon, be restored and brought back again unto
 ‘ the temple which is to be built at Jerusalem, and let
 ‘ them be placed in their own places in the house of God.’

When king Darius had read this decree of Cyrus, he
 signified the contents thereof to Tatnai, Shethar-Boznai, and
 their companions the Apharsachites; and withal gave them
 a strict charge, that they should be far from molesting or
 hindering the Jews in their building; but that they should
 let the work of the house of God alone, and let the go-
 vernors and elders of the Jews build the house of God in
 its place.

‘ Moreover (said he, in his letter, in answer to theirs)
 ‘ I make a decree, what ye shall do to the elders of these
 ‘ Jews, for the building of this house of God, viz. That
 ‘ out of the king’s tribute beyond the river, expences be
 ‘ forthwith given to these men, that they be not hindered.
 ‘ And what they have need of for the burnt-offering of
 ‘ the God of heaven, both of young bullocks, rams and

they had done formerly. But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, and the prophets of God helped them; so that these enemies of theirs could not now cause them to cease; whereupon the matter was brought before king Darius.

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 ‘ king’s house. And also let the golden and silver vessels
 ‘ of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth
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 ‘ Jews, for the building of this house of God, viz. That
 ‘ out of the king’s tribute beyond the river, expences be
 ‘ forthwith given to these men, that they be not hindered.
 ‘ And what they have need of for the burnt-offering of
 ‘ the God of heaven, both of young bullocks, rams and

‘ lambs, with wheat, salt, wine, and oil, let it be given
‘ them day by day without fail, according to the direction
‘ of the priests which are at Jerusalem, that they may offer
‘ sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and
‘ pray for the life of the king and of his sons. And further
‘ (added he) I have made a decree, that whosoever shall
‘ alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house,
‘ and let him be hanged thereon, and let his house be
‘ made a dunghill for this. And the God that hath caused
‘ his name to dwell there, destroy all kings and people that
‘ shall set their hand to alter this word, and to destroy this
‘ house of God that is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made
‘ a decree; let it be done with speed.’

Governor Tatnai, with Shethar-Boznai, and their companions, having received these letters from the king, in compliance therewith speedily furnished the Jews with all necessaries for their building. And the work going on prosperously, through the encouragement which the elders of the Jews received from the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the house was finished on the third day of the month Adar (which is the twelfth month), in the sixth year of the reign of this king Darius.

The building thus finished,* the children of Israel, both priests, Levites, and people (called by a general name the children of the captivity, that is, all such of them as were returned from the captivity), together with all those proselytes that had separated themselves unto them, from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel, kept the feast of the dedication of the house of God with joy, and with great offerings. And having set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses for the service of God, according to the prescript of Moses, they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the Lord made them joyful, by turning the heart of the king unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

The Jews, it seems, in the captivity, had agreed among themselves to observe several fasts, on certain mournful occasions; as one on the tenth month, on the day that Jerusalem was besieged, 2 Kings xxv. 1. Another in the fourth

* Zech. vii.

month, when the city was taken, Jer. lii. 6, 7. Another in the fifth month, when the temple was destroyed by fire, Jer. lii. 12. And another in the seventh month, when their governor Gedaliah was slain, Jer. xli. 1, 2.

These days they had kept with fasting and weeping, and abstaining from company and business. But now a doubt arose among them concerning the fast in the fifth month (which was for the destruction of the temple), whether they should keep that fast still, now that the temple was rebuilt. And upon this occasion the Jews (whether they that were returned, or they that were not yet returned from Babylon, is not agreed among interpreters) sent their ambassadors or deputies (Sherezer and Regem-melech, with their men) to inquire of the Lord, by the priests, which were in the house of the Lord of hosts, and by the prophets, whether they should weep in the fifth month, and separate themselves, as they had done these many years.

The Lord thereupon, by his prophet Zechariah, took occasion to let them know, that in fasts of their own appointing he was not concerned (whereby is plainly intimated, that nothing in religion of man's institution is accepted by the Lord): and that it would please him better, to see them execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassion every one to his brother, and abstain from oppressing the widow, the fatherless, the stranger, and the poor, and from imagining evil one against another in their hearts, than to be ever so observant of outward performances.

Hitherto the work of rebuilding the temple had been carried on by the direction and conduct of Zerubbabel the governor, and Joshua the high-priest; both whom the prophet Zachary speaks honourably of, the one in the third, and the other in the fourth chapter of his prophecy. But now that the temple was finished, Ezra set forward to go up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, by some historians called, for distinction sake, the second.

This Ezra was a priest (whose genealogy, in chap. vii. is deduced from Aaron) and a learned scribe in the law of God, who had hitherto staid at Babylon, with those of the captivity which had not yet returned.* But now, there being great want of such a man at Jerusalem, to instruct the people in the too long neglected law of God, and re-

* A. M. 3513.

form the manners of both priests and people ; the Lord both kindled a zeal in Ezra to undertake that work, and gave him favour with the king to furnish him for the journey.

For when Ezra had acquainted the king with his purpose, and requested leave of him that he might go, the king gave him not only licence to go, but an ample commission to take with him whomsoever he would, and what also he should judge needful, both for his journey thither, and service there. Of which commission this was the tenor :

ARTAXERXES, king of kings, unto EZRA the priest, a perfect Scribe of the law of the God of heaven, greeting !

‘ I make a decree, That all they of the people of Israel,
‘ and of his priests and Levites in my realm, which of their
‘ own free-will are minded to go up to Jerusalem, may go
‘ with thee ; forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and
‘ of his seven counsellors, to inquire concerning Judah and
‘ Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in
‘ thine hand, and carry the silver and gold which the king
‘ and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of
‘ Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem ; and all the silver
‘ and gold that thou canst find in all the provinces of Ba-
‘ bylon, with the free-will offerings of the people, and of
‘ the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God
‘ which is at Jerusalem ; that thou mayst speedily buy with
‘ this money bullocks, lambs, and rams, with their meat-
‘ offerings and drink-offerings, and offer upon the altar of
‘ the house of your God which is at Jerusalem. And what-
‘ soever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to
‘ do with the rest of the silver and gold, that do, after the
‘ will of your God. The vessels also that are given thee
‘ for the service of the house of thy God, which thou shalt
‘ have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of the king’s treasure-
‘ house. And I, even I, Artaxerxes the king, do make a
‘ decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river,
‘ that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law
‘ of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done,
‘ unto an hundred talents of silver (thirty-seven thousand
‘ and five hundred pounds), and to an hundred measures
‘ (cors) of wheat (a cor containing five bushels and five
‘ gallons, makes five hundred sixty-two bushels and a half),
‘ and to an hundred baths of wine, (a bath being the
‘ tenth

‘ tenth part of an omer, and containing four gallons and
 ‘ an half, makes four hundred and fifty gallons) and to an
 ‘ hundred barrels of oil, and salt without measure. What-
 ‘ soever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be
 ‘ diligently done for his house; for why should there be
 ‘ wrath against the king and his sons? Also we certify you,
 ‘ that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers,
 ‘ porters, and Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God,
 ‘ it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute or custom
 ‘ upon them. And thou Ezra, after the wisdom of thy
 ‘ God that is in thine heart, set magistrates and judges,
 ‘ which may judge all the people that are beyond the river
 ‘ (that is, all such as know the laws of thy God, and teach
 ‘ them that know them not). And whosoever will not do
 ‘ the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judg-
 ‘ ment be speedily executed upon him; whether it be unto
 ‘ death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or
 ‘ to imprisonment.’

Ezra, having received these letters from the king, blessed the Lord, in a thankful acknowledgment of his mercy, in having put it into the king’s heart to beautify the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, and in giving him favour with the king, and with his counsellors and mighty princes. And being strengthened by the good hand of the Lord his God, that was upon him for his encouragement, he gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with him.

These with the males of their several families, * being in number one thousand four hundred ninety and six (of whom there is a muster-roll in chap. viii. from ver 2. to 15.) Ezra drew down to the river that runneth to Ahava; where encamping for three days, he took an account of the people and the priests, but found no Levites nor Nethinims among them. Wherefore he sent back Eliezer, and half a score more of the chief men for understanding, with a message to Iddo (who was the chief of the Nethinims at Casiphia) requiring him to send with them some ministers fit for the service of the house of the Lord. And (the Lord so disposing it) they brought him a man of understanding, and seven or eight and thirty more, that were Levites, with two hundred and twenty Nethinims, who were under of-

* Ezra viii.

ficers for the more servile work of the temple, such as the fraudulent Gibeonites were at first appointed to.

When these were come to the camp, and had joined the rest of the company, they made a body of about one thousand seven hundred and fifty. Yet Ezra considering how great a charge they had with them, in both money and plate, and apprehensive of the dangers that might attend them in their march, from the free-booters of the countries through which they were to pass, proclaimed a fast at the river, that they might humble themselves before their God, and implore his guidance, direction, and care for them, their little ones, and all their substance. For though he might, for asking, have had a convoy from the king for their defence, he was ashamed to ask it; having before told the king, that the hand of their God would be for good upon all them that fought him, and his vindictive power and wrath against all those that forsook him.

Having thus fasted and besought their God on this occasion, and received from him some token of acceptance, they committed themselves to his protection, and set forward again. And Ezra having drawn forth twelve of the chief priests, delivered to them by weight the silver and the gold, and the vessels, which the king, with his counsellors and his lords, and all Israel that were present, had offered as an offering for the house of the Lord, and gave them their charge in these words:

‘ Ye are holy (that is, consecrated unto the Lord); and
 ‘ these vessels are holy, (that is, dedicated unto his use);
 ‘ and the silver and the gold are a free-will offering unto
 ‘ the Lord God of your fathers. Watch ye therefore care-
 ‘ fully, and keep them safe, until ye can come to weigh
 ‘ them unto the chief of the priests and Levites, and the
 ‘ fathers of Israel at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the
 ‘ house of the Lord.

This treasure was of a very considerable value. For there were six hundred and fifty talents of silver; which, at three hundred seventy-five pounds to the talent, make two hundred forty-three thousand seven hundred and fifty pounds. The silver vessels weighed an hundred talents, which came to thirty-seven thousand and five hundred pounds. The gold in coin was an hundred talents, which, at four thousand five hundred pounds each talent, brings forth four hundred and fifty thousand pounds. Which three sums together raise
 seven

seven hundred thirty-one thousand two hundred and fifty pounds. Besides all which, there were twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams, and two vessels of fine copper as precious as gold. All which the priests and Levites took the charge of, to bring to the house of their God in Jerusalem.

It was on the first day of the first month, that Ezra set forth with his troops from Babylon; and on the twelfth day of the same month, having disposed all things in order, they left the river of Ahava, where they had made an halt, and pursued their journey to Jerusalem; where they arrived on the first day of the fifth month, chap. vii. 9. and viii. 32. so that they spent four months complete in the journey. Nor was their fear of robbers altogether groundless; for they were way-laid, it seems; but the Lord was with them, and delivered them from the hand of their enemies, and of such as lay in wait by the way.

After they were come to Jerusalem, they lay still three days to rest and refresh themselves, and on the fourth day they discharged themselves of the treasure they had brought; delivering it by weight, in the house of the Lord, to those priests that were appointed to receive and take the charge of it, and an inventory was made of both the number and weight.

Then were burnt-offerings offered unto the God of Israel, by the children of those that had been carried away, and which were now come out of the captivity. After which, Ezra delivering the king's commissions unto the king's lieutenants and governors on that side the river, they, in obedience thereunto, furnished the people with all things necessary to the service of the house of God.

But now came on Ezra's exercise*. For some of the princes, or chief of the Israelites, came to him, and told him, that the people of Israel, and the priests and the Levites, had not separated themselves from the people of the land, namely, the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites; but did according to their abominations. For they had taken of their daughters for wives, both to themselves and to their sons, though expressly forbidden, Deut. vii. 3. By which means the holy seed had mingled themselves with the people of those lands; and (which made it the worse, and the harder to be re-

* Ezra. ix.

formed) the princes and rulers had been chief in this trespass.

When Ezra heard this, he rent his garments, and for meer grief plucking off the hair of his head and beard, he sat down astonished until the evening-sacrifice. During which time, such of the people as trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those others of the captivity that had been drawn into this evil, gathered themselves about him.

But when the time of the evening-sacrifice was come (which was the twelfth hour with them, who began the day at six in the morning, and answers the sixth hour in the afternoon with us) Ezra, falling on his knees, and spreading out his hands unto the Lord his God, thus poured forth the grief of his soul before him :

‘ O my God (said he) I am ashamed, and blush to lift up
 ‘ my face unto thee, my God ; for our iniquities are in-
 ‘ creased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up unto
 ‘ the heavens. Since the days of our fathers have we been
 ‘ in a great trespass unto this day. And for our iniquities
 ‘ have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into
 ‘ the hands of the kings of the nations, to the sword, to cap-
 ‘ tivity, and to be made a spoil, and to confusion of face, as
 ‘ at this day. And now, for a little space, grace (or favour)
 ‘ hath been shewed from the Lord our God, to leave us a
 ‘ remnant to escape, and to give us a nail (meaning a set-
 ‘ tlement) in his holy place ; that our God may lighten our
 ‘ eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage : for we
 ‘ were bondmen ; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our
 ‘ bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us, in the sight of
 ‘ the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, that we might
 ‘ set up the house of our God, and repair the desolations
 ‘ thereof, and to give us a wall (a defence) in Judah and
 ‘ Jerusalem. And now, O, our God, what shall we say after
 ‘ this ? For we have forsaken thy commandments, which
 ‘ thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying,
 ‘ The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is unclean with
 ‘ the filthiness of the people thereof, by reason of their abo-
 ‘ minations, which have filled it, from one end to the other,
 ‘ with their uncleanness. Give not therefore your daughters
 ‘ unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons,
 ‘ nor seek their peace or their wealth (that is, their welfare)
 ‘ for ever ; that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the
 ‘ land,

‘ land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever. And now, after all that hath come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespasses, seeing thou, our God, hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this, should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations, wouldst not thou be angry with us, till thou hast consumed us, so that there should be no remnant, nor escaping? O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous; for we remain yet escaped, as it appeareth this day. Behold, we are before thee, in our trespasses, but we cannot stand before thee, because of this.’

When Ezra had ended his confession and prayer, weeping, and casting himself down before the house of God*; the Lord wrought so upon the hearts of the people, that there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men, women, and children; and the people wept very sore. Which when Shechaniah (a man of a considerable family in Israel) observed, he, for himself and the rest of the people, thus spake unto Ezra:

‘ We have indeed trespassed against our God, in having taken strange wives of the people of the land; yet from this appearance of repentance, and disposition to reformation, there is ground of hope in Israel concerning this thing. Let us now therefore make a covenant with our God to put away all the strange wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God (whom the fear of God hath preserved out of this transgression); and let it be done according to the law. And in order thereunto, arise, thou, Ezra, for this matter belongeth principally unto thee (to whom God hath given both learning to persuade, and authority to require it of the people); yet we also will be with thee; therefore be of good courage and do it.’

Then Ezra, rising up from before the house of God (where, it seems, he had all this while lain prostrate before the Lord) made the chief priests, with the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they would do according to this word. After which, having retired himself into the chamber of Johanan, that he might there fast and mourn, he caused pro-

* Ezra x.

clamation to be made unto all the children of the captivity throughout Judah and Jerusalem, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days, upon penalty that whosoever should neglect to come within that time, should forfeit all his substance, and be himself separated from the congregation of Israel.

Upon this summons all the men of Judah and Benjamin flocked in unto Jerusalem within the three days. But it being the ninth month, the season proved very wet; so that the people sitting in the street before the house of God trembled; partly because of the guilt they were under, and partly for the great rain, which perhaps they might take to be a judgment upon them for their offence.

Being thus gathered together, Ezra the priest, standing up, did thus open the business unto them :

‘ Ye have transgressed, in that ye have taken strange wives to increase the trespasses of Israel. Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his will, in separating yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives.’

To this all the congregation, answering with a loud voice, said : ‘ As thou hast said, so must we do. But the people are many, and it is a time of much rain, so that we are not able to stand abroad; neither is this the work of one day or two, for we are many that have transgressed in this thing. Now therefore, let our rulers throughout all the congregation stand for us. And let all them who have taken strange wives in our several cities come, at appointed times, and with them the elders and judges of every city (to testify that these are all that are guilty in that place) : and so proceed from time to time, until the fierce wrath of our God, for this matter, be turned from us.’

This proposition being approved, and agreed to, Ezra the priest, and certain chief of the fathers, according to their families (having some few others added to them as assistants) were by name deputed to that service : who on the first of the tenth month sat down to examine that matter, and did not make an end with all the men that had taken strange wives, until the first day of the first month following.

But when they had gone through the work, and had taken a list of all the names of all the men, both priests and people, that had taken strange wives (of whom some had children by them) they made them give the hand (which was a certain ceremony of giving security, used to confirm a covenant, as in

in Ezek. xvii. 18.) that they would put them away. Which done, they offered their trespass-offering according to the law, and so the matter ended.

But although some disorders were now reformed, yet many enormities remained yet to be reformed, both in the people, and more especially in the priests. And although the temple was now rebuilt, yet the city lay in a manner waste, without gates or wall, which gave advantage to the enemies of the Jews to insult them. For Zerubbabel, it is probable, was by this time dead, and though Ezra was a learned scribe, and a zealous priest, and had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments, Ezra vii. 10. yet he seems not to have been so qualified for the exercise of civil authority, as the condition of the people and state of the place required.

Wherefore it pleased the Lord to send another of his servants thither to carry on that work, and finish what of it yet remained. This was Nehemiah, one of the captive Jews, who was cup-bearer to king Artaxerxes, and in especial favour with him.

THE
BOOK
OF
NEHEMIAH,
INCLUDING THE PROPHET
MALACHI;

AND

Containing an History (as some compute) of about Seventy Years.

NEHEMIAH being at Shushan, the king's palace (where his office required his attendance) *, and meeting one day with certain of his brethren, men of Judah, who had been at Jerusalem, and were come back again to Chaldea, he inquired of them concerning the Jews that were returned from the captivity, and concerning the state of Jerusalem. They told him that the remnant which were left of the captivity there, in the province of Judea, were in great affliction, and under foul reproach from their enemies: that the wall of Jerusalem remained broken down, and the gates thereof burnt with fire, as the Babylonians had left it, when Nebuchadnezzar had sacked the city, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 19. and Jer. lii. 13, 14.

* Nehem. i.

A. M. 3526.

This

This so affected good Nehemiah, that (though he himself, for himself wanted nothing, living in the favour of his prince, and affluence of all things necessary) he sat down and wept; and having mourned and fasted several days, he at length poured forth his supplication to the Lord in this manner :

‘ I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him, and observe his commandment, let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayst hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel, thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against thee. Both I and my father’s house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst by thy servant Moses, when thou saidst (Deut. iv. 25, &c.) If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations; but if ye turn again unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them, though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and bring them unto the place where I have chosen to set my name. Now since these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand; I beseech thee, O Lord, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants who desire to fear thy name; and prosper thou, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant me favour in the sight of the king.’

By thus continually mourning, fasting, and afflicting himself, for the sake of his brethren, his country, and the holy city, Nehemiah had imprinted such tokens of sorrow in his face, that when his turn came to wait, and, according to his office, he took up the wine to present it to the king, the king observed it; and he not having been used, in former times, to be sad in the king’s presence, the king thereupon said to him, ‘ Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart.’

Though Nehemiah was struck with fear upon the king’s discovering the trouble of his mind, out of an awful regard he had to him; yet, the king having given him so fair an occasion to open unto him the cause of his grief, he took heart. And having used the common appreciation of subjects

to princes in those times [Let the king live for ever!] ‘How
 ‘ (said he) can my countenance be otherwise than sad, when
 ‘ the city, the place of my fathers sepulchres, lieth waste,
 ‘ and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?’

The king thereupon asking him what he would request, he, lifting up his heart to God for assistance, answered; ‘If it
 ‘ please the king, and if thy servant hath found favour in
 ‘ thy sight, my request is, that thou wouldest send me to
 ‘ Jerusalem, the city of my fathers sepulchres, that I may
 ‘ build it.’

Now found Nehemiah the answer of his prayer*. For God gave him so great favour with the king, that when the king had asked him (the queen also sitting by) how long his journey should be; and within what time he would return; and Nehemiah had set a time, the king not only gave him leave to go, but upon Nehemiah’s further request, gave him letters both to the governors of the provinces beyond the river, charging them to convey him safely over, until he should come into Judea, and to the keeper of the king’s forest, commanding him to furnish him with timber for beams for the gates of the palace, and for the walls, and for the building of an house for Nehemiah himself, as governor, to dwell in, while he should reside there.

Thus furnished, Nehemiah set forward; and when he was come to the governors, and had delivered his credentials to them, they, seeing the equipage in which he came (for the king had sent some of the captains of his army, with horsemen, to attend him thither), received him with due respect. Only Sanballat the Horonite (a Toparch, or chief officer among the Moabites) and Tobiah the Ammonite (called the servant, because, as some think, he was a vassal to the Persian monarch; though otherwise a man of prime note among the Ammonites) being great enemies to the Jews, were exceedingly vexed, when they heard that there was a man come to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

But Nehemiah, not regarding them, pursued his journey to Jerusalem; whither being come, and having spent three days there, he arose one night, and taking only some few men with him, he went out privately to take a view of the breaches that were in the walls of the city, without telling any man what God had put in his heart to do.

* Nehem. ii.

Going out therefore by the gate of the valley before the Dragon-well, he rode on to the dung-port (called so, because the filth and soilage of the city was usually carried forth through that gate), and viewed the walls of the city on that side, which he found were broken down, and the gates thereof consumed with fire. Thence directing his course to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool (each taking name from the pool Siloah, or Siloam) he found the way so ruinous, that there was no place for the beast he rode on to pass. Wherefore turning from thence, he went up (while it was yet night) by the brook; and having on that side also viewed the wall, he turned back again: and entering the city by the gate of the valley (through which he went forth) he returned home; none of the Jews, neither priests, nobles, rulers, nor workmen (save those few that went with him) knowing whither he went, or what he did; for he had not yet opened his purpose to any of them.

But after he had from this personal view satisfied himself what was needful to be done, * he called his brethren the Jews together, and thus bespake them: 'Ye see (said he) the distress we are in; how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the walls thereof are burnt with fire; come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.' Then to encourage them, he told them how good the Lord had been unto him, and what favour he had given him with the king, relating to them for their confirmation the discourse that had passed between the king and him, shewing them also the commission and authority which the king had given him. Whereupon they all cried out, 'Let us arise and build;' and strengthening one another, they cheerfully set their hands to the work.

But when Sanballat and Tobiah, with Geshem (a Toparch or governor in Arabia) heard that they were going to build (which they soon did, by means of Tobiah's wife, who was a Jewess), they laughed them to scorn; and in contempt of them said, 'What is this thing ye do; will ye rebel against the king?'

Nehemiah thereupon letting them know that he had sufficient warrant for what he did, added, 'The God of heaven will prosper us; therefore we his servants will rise and build. But as for you (said he) ye need not trouble

* Nehem. iii.

‘ yourselves about it, for ye have no portion nor right, no, nor any memorial (no register nor monument) in Jerusalem, to shew that ye, or any of your ancestors, did ever belong to God.’

By this means rid, for the present, of these envious neighbours, the Jews went heartily on with their building; Eliashib their high-priest, with his brethren the priests, setting them a good pattern, by building up the sheep-gate, the nearest to the temple, and through which the sheep, which were offered in sacrifices, were usually brought. This gate the priests took upon them to build, and did both finish and dedicate it. Whose example the people following, divided the work among them, some taking one part, some another, as is particularly set forth in this third chapter; where we may observe, that some parts of the work were undertaken by private families, as in ver. 4. 6, &c. some parts by bodies politick or corporations, as by the men of Jericho, ver. 2. by the Tekoites, ver. 5. (where a brand is set on their nobles, for not putting their necks to the work of the Lord); some parts by companies or trades, as the goldsmiths and the merchants, ver. 32. And some were so zealous and forward, that when they had finished one piece of the work, they undertook another, as Merimoth, ver. 4. and 21. and the poor Tekoites (though deserted by their lords), ver. 5. and 27.

Thus many hands making light work, the building went on apace. Which when Sanballat understood, he was wroth, and in great indignation mocked the Jews.* And to animate the soldiers against them, he said to his brethren (or companions) in the hearing of the army of Samaria, ‘ What do these feeble Jews intend to do? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burnt?’ Whereupon Tobiah, to shew his contempt also of the Jews and their undertaking, deridingly added, ‘ Even that which they build is such, that if but a fox go up upon it, she shall break down their stone wall.’

These scornful taunts kindled a zeal in good Nehemiah to spread his complaint before the Lord, and to cry unto him for vengeance upon those malicious opposers of his people and work. But the work notwithstanding went for-

* Nehem. iv.

ward ; for the people, encouraged by Nehemiah, and heartily engaged in their own minds, carried it on with that earnest diligence, that in a little time the parts of the wall were joined together, and raised to half its height.

But when Sanballat and Tobiah, with their accomplices (the Arabians, Ammonites, and Ashdodites,) heard that the walls of Jerusalem were so near made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, they raged exceedingly, and conspired all of them together to go and fight against Jerusalem, that they might hinder the work. And so closely had they laid their design, and intended to carry it so privately on, that the Jews should not see any of them, nor should know any thing of the matter, until they were got in among them, and were killing and slaying them.

But though this conspiracy was carried on with all imaginable secrecy, yet the Jews which dwelt by them got notice of it ; and hasting to Jerusalem, informed their brethren there of the design that was formed against them ; letting them know, that their enemies did not intend to proclaim war, nor to bring it to a pitched battle, but to take them at unawares, and unprovided, and to set upon them in all places where they could find an advantage.

This made the Jews (having first poured forth their prayers unto Almighty God for help) set a watch day and night against their enemies, to discover and give notice of their approaches. And because the men of Judah complained that the strength of the bearers of burdens was decayed, and so much rubbish yet remained to be removed, that they should not be able both to carry away the earth, and to defend themselves while they were working at the wall ; therefore Nehemiah set the rest of the people, according to their families, in the lower places behind the wall, as well as on the higher places, armed with their swords, their spears, and their bows, that they might be both a defence and encouragement to the workmen.

Which done, Nehemiah, having taken a view of them, went amongst them to cheer and hearten them on ; bidding both the nobles and rulers, and the rest of the people, not to be afraid of them, but to remember the Lord, who is great and terrible ; and if (said he) they assault you, fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

Thus stood they on their guard for a while, till they understood that Sanballat and his party, finding their design was discovered, and that the Jews were prepared to receive them, had let it fall. Whereupon the Jews, perceiving that God had brought to nought the counsel of their enemies, returned all of them to the wall, every one to his work. Yet so, that from that time forward, one half of Nehemiah's servants (suppose his guards) wrought in the work, and the other half held the weapons and armour in readiness, if need should be, and the rulers stood behind the people to back them. Moreover, the builders had every one his sword by his side whilst he builded: and all the labourers, as well they that laded the burdens, as they that bare them, wrought every one with one hand, and held a weapon with the other.

The trumpeter always attended Nehemiah the governor; and because the work was great and large, and by reason of the length of the wall they were separated upon it, one company far from another, he directed the nobles and all the people, that wheresoever they should hear the sound of the trumpet, they should forthwith resort thither, to relieve those that should be engaged; and for their encouragement and comfort he told them, ' Their God would fight for them.'

Thus went they on, plying the work hard; for half of them held the spears from break of day, till the stars appeared at night. And then Nehemiah caused all the workmen, with their servants, to lodge within Jerusalem, that they might be a guard to the city in the night, as well as labour in it in the day. And so intent and watchful was Nehemiah in the work; that neither he, nor his brethren, nor his servants, nor the guards, did any of them put off their clothes, except it were to shift themselves for washing.

While thus all hands were busily employed, * a discontent brake out among the common people, which was likely to have given a troublesome diversion from the work, if it had not been timely and discreetly composed; the occasion whereof was this:

There being a dearth or famine in the land, provisions were grown scarce and dear, and the poorer sort of people,

* Nehem. v.

being

being continually engaged in the publick buildings, had not time to improve their own estates to the best advantage for themselves and their families; so that they began to be pressed with straits, and the rich, who by the law (Deut. xv. 7, 8.) should have helped them freely, instead thereof, did rather oppress them with usurious exactions.

This burthen, when they had long borne it, grew so heavy and uneasy to them, that it made them break forth into a general complaint, both the men and their wives, against their brethren the rich Jews. Some of them alleged that they had great families to maintain, and therefore were fain to take up corn (upon trust) to keep them alive. Others said they had mortgaged their lands, vineyards, and houses, for money to buy corn, because of the dearth. And there were also that said, they had been forced to take up money upon their lands and vineyards to pay the king's tribute, which all the Jews were subject to (Ezra iv. 13.) except the priests and other ministerial officers belonging to the house of God (Ezra vii. 24.) But though they thus assigned divers causes of their poverty and straits, yet in this they all agreed, that though their flesh was as good as the flesh of their rich brethren, and their children as near and dear to them as the rich mens children were to them, yet they were driven to such necessities by their brethrens exactions upon them, that they were fain to subject their sons to bondage, and their daughters to be servants. And they instanced that some of their daughters were brought into bondage already, and it was not in their power to redeem them, because other men had their lands and vineyards.

When Nehemiah had heard this great complaint, he was very angry. And consulting with himself how he might remedy this mischief, he rebuked the nobles and the rulers for exacting usury every one of his poor brother. And that he might the better prevail upon them, he (politickly) set a great assembly of the people against them, before whom he reasoned thus with them:

' We (said he) according to our ability (and indeed according to our duty, Levit. xxv. 48.) have redeemed our brethren the Jews which were sold unto the heathen; and will you even sell your brethren? Or shall they be sold unto us?' This put those oppressing Jews to such a nonplus, that, not knowing what answer to give, they held their peace.

Whereupon Nehemiah pursuing the point, said, 'It is not good that ye do. Ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God, were it but to avoid the reproach of our enemies the heathen? I likewise, and my brethren, and servants, might exact of them money and corn; I pray you let us leave off this usury: restore I pray you this day to them their lands, their vineyards, and their oliveyards, and their houses, and the hundredth part also of the money, corn, wine, and oil that ye exact of them.'

To this they all agreed, saying, 'We will restore them, and will require nothing of them, but will do as thou hast said.' Whereupon Nehemiah, taking them at their word, called the priests, and in their presence did take an oath of them, that they would do as they had then promised. And to engage them the more sensibly and strictly to it, he shook his lap, and (by way of imprecation) said, 'So God shake out every man from his house, and from his service, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out and made empty.' To which all the congregation said Amen, and praised the Lord, and the people did according to this promise.

Thus was a discontented and dangerous faction appeased and allayed by the discreet care and zeal of Nehemiah. Nor did he work upon the people by precept only and admonition, but by a self-denying example he led them on. For whereas the former governors that had been before him were chargeable unto the people, taking provision of them for their table, besides a standing revenue of forty shekels of silver (that is, fifty shillings) by the day; and suffered even their servants to bear rule over the people; Nehemiah not only did not so, because of the fear of God that was upon him, but he forebore buying any land for himself, and was continually employed, both he and his servants, in or about the work of the wall. And during the whole twelve years time of his government, from the twentieth to the two-and-thirtieth year of king Artaxerxes, he not only forbore to take the governor's maintenance, but at his own charge kept an open house; having commonly at his table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, besides those that came in unto him from the heathen.

Answerable to such a family was the provision of his house. For every day he had an ox dressed, and six choice sheep, besides fowls; and once in ten days, store of all sorts of

of wine. All which he defrayed at his own charge, not requiring the allowance due to him as governor, because he saw the burthen was heavy upon the people.

By this encouraged, the people plied the work so hard, that now the wall was builded, and all the breaches in it made up, * only the gates were not yet hung. But when Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, understood how fast the work went on, and how near it was to be wholly finished, they turned their fury into crafty policy, thinking thereby to betray Nehemiah. Wherefore they sent to invite him to give them a meeting in one of the villages in the plain of Ono (a place in the tribe of Benjamin), purposing when they had him there, to do him a mischief. But he, instead of going, returned them answer, 'That he had a great work in hand, which must needs stop if he should leave it, and therefore he was not at leisure to come down to them.'

So earnest they were to have gotten him within their reach, that four times, one after another, they sent him the same invitation, and he as often returned them the same answer.

At length Sanballat, perceiving that Nehemiah was too wary a man to be drawn into danger by such a general invitation, concluded he would try him once more, on pretence of an important business, which he thought would touch him to the quick, and make him come to clear himself. Wherefore he sent his servant to him the fifth time, with a letter in his hand, but open; which when Nehemiah had received, he found the contents thereof to be thus:

'It is reported among the heathen, and Geshem saith it, that thou and the Jews intend to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king; and that thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, and to say, There is a king in Judah. And now shall it be reported to the king (Artaxerxes) according to these words. Wherefore, come now, and let us take counsel together about it, that is, how to stop the spreading of this report, and prevent the danger that may arise thereby.'

Nehemiah easily perceived that all this was but a contrived design to make him and the Jews afraid, that so

* Nehem. vi.

their hands being weakened, the work they were about, though so near finished, might yet receive a stop, and not be completed. Wherefore, in contempt of Sanballat and his wicked devices, he returned him this short and blunt answer: 'There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.'

Then praying to God to encourage and strengthen him, he went to the house of Shemaiah (the son of Delaiah the priest), whom he found shut up, under pretence (as is supposed) of a vow he had made for the safety of Nehemiah, which he feigned to be much concerned for. And pretending to prophesy, that the enemies of Nehemiah would come to slay him in the night, he would have persuaded Nehemiah to go with him into the inner part of the temple, and secure themselves there, by shutting the doors of the temple upon them.

Though Nehemiah, not then suspecting Shemaiah of falshood, did not at first apprehend his design; yet from a sense of religion and honour with respect to the work he was engaged in, and the station he was placed in, he answered with a sort of indignation, 'Should such a man as I flee! What man under my circumstances would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.'

When Nehemiah had given this resolute answer, he perceived by the effect it had on Shemaiah, that God had not sent him with that message to him; but that, being hired by Tobiah and Sanballat, he had pronounced that prophecy against him, on purpose to have put him in fear, and have drawn him into something which might have furnished them with matter for an evil report, wherewith they would have reproached him.

But Nehemiah was preserved out of all their snares. And having committed himself to God, the righteous judge and avenger of his suffering servants, he went boldly on in his undertaking; so that on the 25th day of the sixth month (by the Jews called Elul) the whole work was completed in fifty-two days: so says the text expressly; but from whence to begin the computation interpreters are not agreed. Tremellius and Junius would begin these fifty-two days after the stone wall was built. The annotators on the English bible, in their marginal note on Nehemiah vi. 15. take these days to begin after Nehemiah had sent his answer to Sanballat, which is less likely than the other. I rather incline

to

to think that the whole work, considering the many hands that were employed, and the great diligence that was used in it, was begun and ended in fifty-two days. Nor can there be much more time allowed for it; for it was in the first month (called by the Jews Nisan) that Nehemiah was in Babylon, and obtained of the king leave to go to Jerusalem, Nehem. ii. 1. And though we have not an express account what time he spent in his journey, and when he arrived at Jerusalem, yet if we may guess at it by the time Ezra spent in the same journey, when he came from Babylon to Jerusalem, (allowing for the delay Ezra had at the river Ahava when he first set forth, Ezra viii. 15. 31.) it is not probable that Nehemiah got to Jerusalem till about the end of the fourth month; for Ezra, though he set out from Babylon on the first day of the first month, reached not Jerusalem till the first day of the fifth month. And from thence to the 25th of the 6th month may make out the two-and-fifty days, and Nehemiah's three days rest before he began; or thereabouts.

But not to be over-curious in a matter not of the greatest moment, when the Jews enemies, as well the Samaritans as the heathen that were round about them, understood the building was fully finished, they were much dejected in their minds, for they perceived that this work was brought to perfection by the God of the Jews.

Yet for all this Nehemiah was not free from both trouble and danger; for the nobles of Judah, as they had all along done, did still hold a correspondence with Tobiah, sending letters frequently to him, and receiving letters from him. For he, by linking himself and his family in marriages among them, had gotten a great interest in Jerusalem; in-somuch that many of the Jews (which is strange to think) were sworn unto him. He himself had married a Jewess, the daughter of Shecaniah the son of Arah (a head of a considerable family, who brought back from the captivity seven hundred seventy-and-five persons, Ezra. ii. 5.) and his son Johanan had married the daughter of Meshullam (the son of Berechiah), of another great family in Judah, Nehem. vi. 17, 18.

By means of these cross-matches, this crafty Ammonite had wound himself into the interest and affection of the Jewish nobles, who would take occasion sometimes to commend him; and as his name (Tobiah) signifies a good Lord, they

they would set forth his good deeds before Nehemiah. And, which was worse, they discovered to him Nehemiah's counsels, which emboldened Tobiah to attempt by his letters to put Nehemiah in fear.

This made Nehemiah more watchful over both him and them,* lest conspiracy should be carried on between them for the betraying of the city. Wherefore singling out his brother Hanani, and Hananiah, the ruler of the palace (who was a faithful man, and one that feared God above many), he gave them a particular charge over Jerusalem, that they should not suffer the gates of the city to be opened, until the sun had been up some time; and that in the evenings they should stand by and see the gates firmly barred; and should appoint watches (not of loitering fellows, or unsettled stragglers, but) of the house-keepers in Jerusalem, who should take their turns to watch, and should have their stations every one against his own house.

But because the city was large, and the inhabitants but few, by reason that the houses were not yet generally builded, Nehemiah (as God put it into his heart) assembled the nobles and rulers, together with the people, that they might be reckoned by their genealogies; having found a register of the genealogy of them who came up at the first, wherein the names of the heads of families, with the number of persons belonging to each family, were particularly set down, though with some diversity in the accounts given thereof by Ezra, (chap. ii.) and by Nehemiah here. The reason of which difference is by some supposed to be, that the register or catalogue we have in Ezra was made at Babylon before they set forward; the other, which Nehemiah found, was made at Jerusalem after they were come thither; and there might alterations happen in their families in so long a journey.

By this register the people being called over by their families, some of them were at a great loss, not being able to shew their father's house, nor their pedigree, to manifest whether they were of Israel or no. And even of the priests, some sought their genealogy by the register, but could not find it; and were therefore, as polluted, put from the priesthood, the governor commanding that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there should stand up a priest

* Nehem. vii.

with Urim and Thummim, who might from God determine whether they were of the priestly race or no.

The poll being taken, whereby they knew both their numbers and strength, that part of the people which did not dwell at Jerusalem, did agree to bring one of ten, which should be taken by lot out of their numbers, to dwell in the holy city Jerusalem, that they might be an additional strength to the place. And this was so well accepted of by the rest of the people, that they thereupon blessed (or returned thanks to) all those men that thus willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.

While now the people were assembled together,* and having settled (as well as they could) their genealogies, and the governor, with their chief fathers and the rest of the people, had made their free-will-offerings for the work of the Lord, Ezra the scribe, at the request of the people, brought forth the book of the law, which the Lord, by Moses, had commanded Israel; and being in the street before the Water-gate, Ezra, the priest and scribe, stood up upon a pulpit of wood. So the text in the English; but the margin from the Hebrew says, 'A tower of wood.' And probably it might be of the like form with that which in the margin to chap. ix. 4. is called a scaffold. Whatever fashion it was of, it was something made on purpose to stand upon, not in; and it was large enough, it seems, for thirteen besides himself to stand on: for so many, if I miscount them not, stood beside him, six on his right hand, and seven on his left.

Being thus raised a little above the rest of the people, that he might be the better both seen and heard of them all, Ezra opened the book in their sight, at which they all stood up. And when Ezra had blessed the Lord, the great God, all the people lifting up their hands answered, Amen, Amen; and bowing their heads, worshipped the Lord with their faces towards the ground.

It is the opinion of some, that the people were gathered in several distinct assemblies (some think eight) at one and the same time, for the conveniency of hearing the law read and expounded; which is not altogether unlikely; for besides Ezra, the Levites are said to have read in the

* Nehem. viii.

book of the law, and to have given the sense, and caused the people to understand it.

However, the people, it seems, when they heard the words of the law (which they were sensible they had transgressed) did mourn and weep. So that Nehemiah and Ezra, with the Levites, were fain to quiet and still them, bidding them not mourn nor weep at that time, but hold their peace, because that day was holy unto the Lord their God; and therefore they should not shew any tokens of grief or sorrow on that day, but should make good cheer, eating and drinking of the best, and should send portions of their provisions unto them for whom nothing was prepared. For that day, being the first of the seventh month, was holy unto the Lord their God, and the joy of the Lord was their strength.

This being a proposition very agreeable to the people, they readily closed with it, and went their way to eat and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood what had been read and declared to them.

On the next day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, to be more particularly instructed in the law. And upon further search, they found written in the law (Levit. xxiii. 40.) that the children of Israel should dwell in booths, in the feast of the seventh month; and that they should make proclamation in all their other cities, as well as in Jerusalem, that the people should go forth and fetch olive-branches, and pine-branches, and myrtle-branches, and palm-branches, and branches of thick trees to make booths.

When therefore this was published to the people, they went forth and brought home branches, and made themselves booths therewith, some upon the roofs of their houses, others in their courts, some in the courts of the house of God, others in the streets; so that all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity, made booths, and sat under them. And great gladness was among them on this occasion; for this was more than had been done since the days of Joshua the son of Nun, which was more than a thousand years.

But after this solemnity was over, the children of Israel assembled themselves again on the four-and-twentieth day
of

of the same month; * and now they appeared in sackcloth, fasting and mourning with earth upon them, and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. In which having briefly touched upon the greatness and goodness of God, they enumerated his gracious and merciful dealings with their fathers from the time he made the covenant with Abraham; and acknowledging their fathers and their own disobedience and rebellion, they confessed to the justice of God's chastisement. And in the conclusion they made a solemn covenant with the Lord that they would walk in his law given by Moses. Which covenant, that it might be the more firm and lasting, they committed to writing, and the chief of their nobles, with the priests and Levites, did set their seals unto it. The rest of the people who did not seal it, both men and women, old and young, that were come to years of understanding, to testify their concurrence with their brethren therein, did bind themselves with an oath and execration to the observance thereof.

But alas! they quickly broke both their oath and the covenant †. For Nehemiah having settled the officers both in church and state (chapters xi. and xii.) went back, according to his engagement, to king Artaxerxes at Babylon. And although he was absent but a little time, probably not much above a year, yet in that time they fell into great disorders.

For Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chambers of the house of God, and being allied to Tobiah (the Jews great enemy,) had prepared for him a great chamber in the court of the house of God, wherein they were wont in former times to lay the meat-offerings, and other holy things, for the use of the temple and priests.

This intimacy of theirs with that prophane Ammonite, led them into a violation of their covenant they had so lately made, by prophaneing the sabbath, and marrying with the heathen; so that when Nehemiah returned from Babylon, he found it no small work to reform them.

It grieved him sore, that so open an enemy, and so mischievous a man, as Tobiah was, should have a chamber prepared for him in the court of the house of God, and he resolved to oust him at any rate; yet he held it

* A. M. 3538.

† Nehem. ix.

needful to do it as warily as he could, to prevent sedition or tumult; knowing how far he had insinuated himself into the good opinion of too many of the people, especially the great ones.

Causing therefore the book of the law to be read in the audience of the people, it was therein found written (Deut. xxiii. 3.) 'That the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come unto the congregation of God for ever, because they met not the children of Israel with bread and water * (that is, with friendly entertainment) when they came out of Egypt; but hired Baalam against them to curse them; though God turned the curse into a blessing.'

When the people heard this, they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude. And this opened the way for Nehemiah to rid himself of Tobiah, who was an Ammonite, without danger of the people's protecting him, or at all siding with him. Wherefore, without more ado, he cast forth all Tobiah's house-hold-stuff out of the chamber; and causing it to be cleansed, he brought again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat-offering and the frankincense into it.

Then observing that, in his absence the portions of the Levites had not been given them, the want of which had made them forsake their several ministerial services, and betake themselves every one to his field for maintenance, he contended with the rulers about it; and reducing the Levites to their places and business, he caused the people to bring in their tythes, and appointed treasurers to receive and distribute them.

He took notice also that some of the Jews did prophane the sabbath, by doing servile works upon it; as treading their wine-presses, bringing in sheaves of corn, with wine, grapes, figs, and all manner of burdens, into Jerusalem, upon laden asses on the sabbath day. Others sold victuals, and all manner of wares on that day. All which he testified against; and contending with the nobles about it, said unto them, 'What an evil thing is this that ye do, in prophaning the sabbath day! Did not your fathers thus? and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city, for such things? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by prophaning the sabbath.'

* Nehem. xiii:

Thus for a while he reasoned with them. But finding that words would not do, he commanded that, towards the evening before the sabbath, the gates of the city should be shut; and that they should not be opened again until after the sabbath was ended. And because he would be sure that this command should be duly observed, he set some of his own servants at the gates, to see that no burden was brought in on the sabbath day.

By this means the merchants, and sellers of all kinds of wares, were greatly disappointed. For coming, as they used to do, with their goods to sell, and not being admitted to enter, they were forced to lodge abroad without Jerusalem. Which when they had done once or twice, and yet would not take warning, Nehemiah testified against them, asking them, 'Why they lodged before the wall?' And in short told them, 'If they did so again, he would lay hands on them.' That so scared them, that they came no more on the sabbath day; yet lest they should have come again, he commanded the Levites to cleanse themselves, and come and guard the gate, that the sabbath day might be kept holy.

But in no case did Nehemiah express a warmer zeal, than against those mixed marriages which were made between Jews and other nations. For having found some Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, and of Ammon, and of Moab, whose children, he observed, spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews language, but used a mongrel speech, patched up out of both languages; he contended with them to that degree, that he not only cursed them, but smiting some of them, he plucked off their hair, and made them swear that they should not give their daughters unto the sons of other people, nor take of the daughters of other people for their sons, or for themselves. For (said he to them) 'Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? so that although among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel; yet even him did outlandish women cause to sin. Shall we then (added he) hearken unto you, to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?'

Nor dealt he thus with the meanest only, but, like a good judge, executing judgment impartially, he served them

all alike whom he found guilty in this matter; for one of the sons of Jojada, the son of Eliashib the high-priest, having married a daughter of Sanballat the Horonite, he chased him from him.

Yet notwithstanding all the care and pains which this good man took to reform that people, how quickly and greatly they were depraved again after his death, appears by the close expostulations of the prophet Malachi with them*; whom, not long after, the Lord raised up and sent to reprove them, and who is the last of the prophets of whom we have any writing or mention in the Old Testament.

He having set forth the peculiar love of God to the seed of Jacob, and noted their foul ingratitude, taxes them in general, the priests more particularly, with irreligion and prophaneness, in polluting the altar of the Lord, corrupting the covenant of Levi, and making many to stumble at the law. He reproved them for marrying with the heathen, for mocking God with empty shews only of religion, whilst they were notoriously guilty of the highest crimes, as forcery, adultery, swearing falsely, and oppressing the labourer, the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger. The people he impeached also of robbing God, in withholding the tythes and offerings. Which, being a part of the ceremonial law, and appropriated to the maintenance of the Levitical priesthood, while that priesthood lasted, to which they were given, and that law stood, by which they were required to be paid, could not, without great injustice, be detained; wherefore he sharply rebuked them, as well for that as other enormities of which they were guilty.

And as he had before (in chap. i. ver. 11.) given as it were a transient touch of the calling of the Gentiles, and introducing the purely spiritual and gospel worship; so, in chapter iv. he foretold the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of his forerunner John the Baptist, under the name of Elijah, with the happy effects thereof; the turning of the heart of the fathers to the children, and of the children to their fathers. Which both concludes his prophecy, and closes the Old Testament.

Now although from the death of Nehemiah to the birth of our Saviour Christ, amongst the various computations, there

* Malachi. A. M. 3578.

are reckoned, at the least, more than four hundred years; in which time were many and great revolutions in the Jewish state, and the church of God underwent most cruel sufferings, from both the Grecians and the Romans; yet since the account thereof is to be sought, partly from the apocryphal books of the Maccabees, partly from other histories of no better authority; having thus far followed the thread of Sacred History, through all the books of the Old Testament, which are generally received as canonical, that I may not mix uncertainties with certainties, I here let fall my pen.

END of VOL. II.



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